

HellDribble

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Friday, 02/10/98

Auran - a day in Paradise 02/10/98

Each day begins just after sunrise as the staff arrive bright and cheery (lethargic and in desperate need of caffeine) at the ungodly hour of 9AM. Filled with the joy of living, they struggle to reconcile the presence of sunlight filtering into the office with their internal body clock, still cruelly stuck at 4AM. But a quick shot of caffeine, a casual chat with a colleague suffering the same symptoms, a wander around the office and some breakfast and they're ready for work by 10AM.

Thankfully though, there is usually some other distraction somewhere in the office that they can devote their faltering attention to - like a new game, demo, new controller for one of the game consoles or a video or something. Game evaluation is an important part of their day. Fun? - hey it can get pretty uncomfortable after half an hour of standing behind someone watching them play a demo. If you're not careful you could knock over a partition or develop RSI of the open jaw. We've lost some good people that way. It's a cruel way to go, though I try to remind them 'Take a breath, and for God's sake blink!!'.

After all this it seems like no time at all before they have to struggle in to order their lunch when the reminder is paged at a quarter to eleven - hey it's easy to overlook things when you are this busy.

But the receptionists are patient, and used to inane questions and comments like...

What's the time? What day is this? Did I remember to get dressed this morning? Wow, how long have you been working here. When is lunch coming? How do I send a fax? What is a fax? Where does a butterfly go when it rains? What is the capital of Lithuania?

That done, it's time to sit and swear at the software and hardware we use to develop Games. When you have to sit on the cutting edge, you're gonna bleed a little, and there is a dangerously strong flow of arterial blood here. Another important distraction is Critical Mass. This is the flow of staff toward some cool new feature being demonstrated. It continues until the gathering is so large no staff member in the building is capable of resisting the pull. Sort of like a mosh pit but without the dancing, music, and evidence of regurgitation.

Lunch! We have it brought in and if Laura ever felt insecure, the sight of the programming staff salivating when she arrives at the back door would certainly make her feel wanted. The digestive juices have been preparing well in advance and the feeding frenzy begins with raids on other people's orders. Oh, you don't order the chips unless you want to share.

The mood is a good deal less frenetic after too much food has been eaten too quickly. Then the brave amongst us spend 3 seconds trying to work out why anyone would watch daytime TV. The brain starts to slow, the spittle slides to one corner of the mouth and the jaw drops, as the eyes lose their glint in the numbing glow of this journalistic refuse. As we pass the TV and games room, a debate is playing between Fat Men who want to be Thin Women and their partners. I wonder how anyone ever thought they were human. The partners are now stunned that their mates are a twisted publicity seeking pervert who would become a professional bed wetting nappy wearer if it meant one all-you-can-eat-meal from a take away chain that evades health regulations by never actually having claimed they sold food anyway.

Afternoon. A long stretch of work, table tennis and anticipation of Quake and Pool at the end of the working day. Frames of animation, scenes of the game emerging, the patient stare of a programmer compiling and the sound of a screen frozen in blue one too many times now being shattered against the nearest wall. Thankfully only rarely ... these things cost!

But it's not all glitz and glamour for the brave chaps at Auran. At the end of a hard working day they like to relax. Relax by falling through walls while playing soccer. Relax by punching holes through walls trying to turn their motorbikes around in the garage. Relax by stepping through the ceiling retrieving ping-pong balls, flinging the reception door open to punch a hole in the wall and riding scooters around the office. I know what you're thinking - 'this is why they do their best work virtually', and you'd be right. They do, and better than anyone else - just don't let them play with anything sharp.

GMan.

Friday, 09/10/98

The dribble: just one long (s)lick of saliva on the highway of life.

Reaching back into my throat, I made a sudden grab at my tonsils and yanked them back out through my left nostril. I tied them to the door handle, and started walking swiftly away, the side of my face distorting as I surged forward with my tonsils distending behind me. As my tonsils stretched, I found it harder and harder to move forward, until I came to the point where I could go no further. I jumped. My tonsils pulled my body into motion, dragging me through the air with an acceleration 5 times that of the Earth's gravitational force. As I flew through the air, I fastened my crash helmet securely and braced for impact. A scant two kilometres from the door (3 seconds at the speed I was travelling) tragedy struck: someone opened the door.

After 3 months I had stopped yoyoing enough that I could be brought to a stop by the worlds largest catching mitt.

I decided that my test had been a success and went on to invent an amazing new twist on bungee jumping: jumping with green fingernails.

The Dribble: Friday the 9th of September

Weeeeeeeeeeeelll.... It's good to be back in the land of publicity. As you can guess I've been asked to talk a bit in the illustrious dribble section. So let's talk stuff. I've been informed that our fantastic air conditioners that cool this place to a chilly 23 degrees celsius when they work, have been fixed and we won't have any more trouble with them. That's great news for Trog and I way down in the dark depths of QA (Quality Assurance) where the sun penetrates only with the purpose of turning our rooms into a sweat box. Of course, Trog celebrated by immediately spraying the air with Bug Killer, which circulated with alarming speed so that we smelled it's pine fresh scent that's completely harmless to us for ages.

But enough of that. I'll bring you a little up to date on the happenings of my part of the office. For those of you that don't know, Trog and I are at one end of the Warehouse floor, about as far away from civilisation (or at least the other Auran staff) as you can get (without stepping into the "Sound-Cave", so named not for it's rotating car 3-point-turn negating device, but because it's dark, dank, and people with split personalities hide in there (sorry J :)). We're in the offices that look out across the Computer Graveyard that is QA. It's full of computers in pieces (to the chagrin of many), rivalled only by the myths of our RAL's (resident amiga lover) abode, with it's rolling plains of the burnt out, semi working hulks of C64's, Vic 20's, and of course, coffee stained Amigas. The best thing about QA is the large glass windows that make us feel like fish some of the time, but provide much needed proof of the outside world the rest of the time. As long as the water gets changed once a week, we'll be happy :).

And with that the dribble endeth for this week. Make sure you tune in to the next invigorating episode: same dribble time, same dribble-ch... page.

dribbler out.

Friday, 16/10/98

This weeks Hell Dribble is brought to you by the letter 'A'...that's 'A' for "Aaaaaaargh! What the HellGate is that?", as yelled by numerous Auran employees as they watched a giant mass of storm clouds descend on the office.

Yes, this week was straight out of a Steven King short story, as our New Farm stronghold was assailed by the most violent storm that Queensland has suffered since, er, last time. Hail, 100km/h winds, lightning -- the gods were angry (probably because of something Dribbler did). We hid inside, but still got wet when the roof leaked. Also, we lost our power for half a day! A games developer without power for its compututurs is a sad, crippled beast -- we couldn't even play CTF Quake 2! 'A' is for "Aaaargh!" :) Of course, the garage doors are electric, so we were all trapped with nothing to do but (the horror!) make conversation...

However, just when it seemed that cannabilism was the only option (don't tell her, but web diva CyberSpice was top of the menu), the skies cleared and the sun peeked out. What we saw was impressive -- something like \$40 million damage

to the city. Happily, the building withstood the storm admirably (leaks notwithstanding), and only one employee got struck by lightning -- and it seemed to do him good. Go figure.

Apart from acts of the gods, we hired a new whipping boy... I mean assistant game designer. So the treadmills won't be unmanned next time we lose power, that's for sure. I think we also picked up a new artist, but it's difficult to be sure. You know what artists are like -- it's tricky to tell one from the other -- but we wish him well. Hope he's got decent grip on his shoes, 'coz that treadmill can be slippery...

Well I better wind it up -- it's only minutes until the fortnightly Indian feeding frenzy in the Auran cafe. Ah, nutritious food in a bucket! With the possible exception of intravenous Coke(tm) drips, there is no more appropriate way to deliver nutrients to game development staff. Here's a tip -- try to get in before the programmers, since they're not averse to using their hands (are they RAL?) if there's no cutlery within arms reach. Wish me luck!

Thus endeth this week's dribble... and remember if it hasn't got fins it probably isn't a fish.

Gribbly.

Friday, 23/10/98

*Greetings and salutations comrades, we thank our ant overlords... oops... *ahem*.. shuffle.... shuffle..*

Welcome to another lively instalment of Hell Dribble, the Hellgate news page with the mostest! Guaranteed to whiten whites and remove stains! A mind expanding experience that will blow your mind! There are ten million stories in the Naked City...

You guessed it, they've let one of those beret wearing, goatee sporting artistes loose in the Dribble arena. Well artiste/designer actually, so I get to be twice as pretentious 8) YOGA FLAME!

So what can I say, well we've got some cool units done for Hellgate such as a Gar...oops wait can't tell you about that yet. Well, how about the those really cool missions set near the border of Ka...no no that's still secret too...

Okay, okay, maybe we should go somewhere a bit broader, such as, I know, what's it like to work at Auran?

Well, I think the Auran community can be best summed in two words - Diff'rent Strokes.

Management are like Mr. Drummond. Mr Drummond was always off in the background doing his business dealings to make sure that the kids could live in the big penthouse apartment (the Auran warehouse, get the analogy!). Often, Mr Drummond would tuck the kids into bed and tell Willis and Arnold the moral of the current episode, hmm, hey, wait, that doesn't happen here...oh well, lets press on with the tenuous analogy...

Admin are like some strange hybrid of Kimberley and that housekeeper they used to have on the show. They tend to be -

- a) Far better dressed than Willis and Arnold
- b) Clean up after Willis and Arnold (albeit grudgingly)
- c) Once a month they organise cakes for Willis and Arnold - hmmn I don't know if that actually happened on Diff'rent Strokes either.

So who are Willis and Arnold, as if you didn't already know...I couldn't decide who should be Willis and Arnold. I mean, obviously, the programmers have the physiques of Gary Coleman (time to duck flying nerf arrows of death), but the artists and designers are often heard to say 'What you talking about, Willis?' to the programmers. (Strangely whenever we say that canned laughter is piped in from the ether, odd that). I'll leave that one up to you, the reader, to decide.

Willis occasionally has visiting friends from the hood, including Killbot, Blahnana and Trog, located in the Compton and Watts of the Auran office, namely the sound studio and QA department.

Hmmn, waitaminit, didn't Willis end up as a...hmmm and Kimberley went into a 7-11 and...hmmm ...and Gary Coleman...hmmmn...oh well, I'm sure its not an omen for the future... 8)

So there you go, I'm sure you now have a far clearer view from the gallery, into the fish bowl in Gribbly's office in the warehouse that is Auran.

The dribble: some people started singing it, not knowing what it was, Then people started hunting him down...

Dark Dribble 6th November, 1998

Well, well, where to start. Seeing as the introductions are out of the way, I'm going to talk about things starting with the letter M.

Mice.

We all spend a lot of time using our mice these days, I'm sure they're the second most common input device (with the herald, the mighty keyboard). This is a call to all those people with ball mice: clean your mice! There's nothing that irks me more than sitting down at a table, starting to move the mouse cursor, and feeling it skip across the table/pad. So then (because I can't handle that dirty mouse feeling), I open it up, and there's like 3-4 mm of caked on gunk!

Music.

I like music, and so do a lot of people here at Auran. I find that as I'm walking around the office, I miss the music I had playing at my computer. So to fill the void, I sing a little. I think that everyone likes to sing a little, and I just happen to be one of those people who sings a lot. However, the giggling and snickering behind the scenes is a little too much to take, people! You know who you are! And as for the people who openly mock me in the streets, the ones that break into full body-wracking laughter as I go by, ENOUGH IS ENOUGH!

Ming-Pong.

I'd just like to point out that since the subject is up, Trog defeats me a whole lot less than he says. In point of fact, he's never won a game against me. Ever. So, there we go. The truth is out.

dribbler out.

CALL 1-800-CLASS-POTATOES for my *free dribble over the phone.

* This offer only valid if you don't use a phone located on, or off Earth. (Standard 10\$/sec charges apply to Earth and non-Earth phones)

Friday, 13/11/98

The Path to Enlightenment (and \$\$\$)

Another week passes in HellGate-land, and development continues apace on what is shaping up to be a quite extraordinary game. Of course, I'm going to have trouble convincing you of this, since we're being careful not to release information prematurely. So you'll have to make do with what CyberSpice misses as she sweeps my dribble clean of Forbidden Secrets!

This week saw some significant advances in the S.A.G.E. Engine, and consequently HellGate. Since we're right in the midst of it, I thought I'd take you through the typical 'flow' of game development. Are you sitting comfortably? Then we'll begin...

Well, the daddy game loves the mummy game very, very much. One night, the daddy game hugs the mummy game real tight, and a few months later, a happy, bouncing baby game is born. And that's all there is too it! No? Not convinced? Well, how about this...

1) *A Twinkle in the Eye*. This is the first trace of a game idea, and it can come from many sources. Game Designers like myself would like to come up with each and every idea from scratch, but in practice just as often come from publishers, management, other staff members or those little voices in your head that urge you to kill! KILL! (oops...)

2) *'It's like Quake meets Pong, with a bit of Civ thrown in!'* AKA 'Running it up the flagpole to see who salutes'. Basically the designer(s) rough out the design, while the programmers and artists wonder how in HellGate they're gonna do half the stuff the designers are babbling about. Meetings inevitably ensue. Bring something to throw.

3) *'The Journey of a Thousand Miles Begins With a Single Step'*. Out of the 'rough design' arguments will have emerged something that resembles a design document (otherwise repeat steps 1 & 2 as necessary or until declared bankrupt). From this, the programmers can begin programming and the artists can begin arting.

4) *Garbage In, Nothing Out*. Hope you brought a magazine, because this stage is the real 'coalface' of games development. Many, many hours of work will be put in with little apparent progress made. Why? Because the

programmers are generally working on the underlying code of the game which doesn't (seem to) do much by itself, but supports the rest of the game in the end. This can take months...

5) *Zeus' Forehead*. This stage is my favourite! This is where the game seems to magically appear after the months of hard slog by the programmers and artists (while the designers sat around getting backrubs in the company Jacuzzi... no wait... that doesn't happen at all!). All that foundation work shows its worth as the designers and programmers construct the game on top of it. This is a very rewarding process, and it is the thought of 5 that prevents much wailing and gnashing of teeth in step 4. This is where we're at with HellGate, as after much engine development feature upon feature is being implemented and the game is really shaping up.

6) *'Aw, this game sucks!'*. Beta testing. This is where you ploy teenagers with Coke(tm) and Pizza to tell you that the game you've been working on for a year is a big pile of cr*p :) This is also a very rewarding process! Actually, beta testing is critical to the development cycle. Think of it as the 'full dress rehearsal' of the game world. This stage includes the dreaded 'feature creep' -- which occurs when beta testers suggest neat features that weren't in the original design. If you thought the arguments in step 2 were impressive, you ain't seen nothing yet!

7) *We're Rich! Rich I Tells Ya!* This is where you release the finished game to worldwide adulation. Typically the game designer is showered with \$\$\$ at this point. Phone calls from the Queen Mother and Nelson Mandela are not uncommon (I hear the Queen Mum loved 'Carmageddon 2').

And that's it!

Note: Any similarity to games development processes living, dead, or in the process of being bought by Microsoft is purely coincidental. Judge's decision is final -- no correspondence will be entered into. Bring a plate.

Gribbler Out!

Gribbly.

Listening to: Heiroglyphics 'Third Eye Vision'

Playing: F-Zero X (N64)

Reading: 'Self Hypnosis for Perceived Fun and Profit' by Matt BJ.

Friday, 20/11/98

I Dribble Therefore I Am.

Or as Ferris Bueller expounded, enunciated and pondered, "As John Lennon once said, 'I don't believe in Beatles, I just believe in me.' Good point, he was the Walrus. I could be the Walrus, but I'd still have to bum rides off people."

So, what news from the Hellgate? What news from Auran's blue and pleasant land?

Glad you asked! Big events in the Hellgate camp were the arrival of Hårn creator Robin Crossby for a visit and me learning the ASCII control code for the â in Hårn.

Robin is here to make sure Gribbly and I do not walk the dark path and mess with all the work that he and Columbia Games have put into Hårn, as well as having some major input into both Hellgate and HårnRPG.

This week also saw the Leonid meteor shower pass over. A group of intrepid Auranoids(not me) gathered at 2.30am at the Batcav...err Auran HQ, then headed off into the unlit wilds to see the predicted 400 shooting stars an hour. I, however, staggered out onto my front drive at 3.30am to watch the meteor shower. The results -

Auran Comet Rangers - Six sightings
Me - None

Well, at least i got more than an hour of sleep. Maybe we'll get a better show when Leonid returns in 33 years.

The other, truly important event of the week in the office was the appearance of the trailer for Star Wars Episode 1. Well I must say it rocked, but more importantly it gave BMan/Dribbler and myself an excuse to have imaginary lightsaber fights! Nobody has ever claimed you need maturity to create games, and we aim to prove that!

Oh, I forgot to tell you about Hellgate again...its almost like a conspiracy! Could it be that we have some sort of plan? You are getting sleepy...sleeeeepy.....sleepppyyy

BUY HELLGATE! BUY HELLGATE! BUY HELLGATE! BUY HELLGATE! BUY HELLGATE! BUY HELLGATE!

Oh, you're back. Umm what can I say about Hellgate, hmmn

Well, the Hellgate artists and our studio manager did the David Attenborough, and went to the zoo, apparently, to film animal movement and walk cycles. Personally, I suspect there is a very cheap bar at the zoo (with a screeching chimp bartender), and the visit probably ended in drunken footage of monkeys doing amusing things with sticks and hitting and *bleeping* one another. Just waiting to see that footage...

Now listening to - the delightful J-pop/punk band Shonen Knife,

'He gets his kicks from a tiny toy
A Green frog filled with catnip
And pretty soon he's gonna be seventeen
Kitty cat birthday party
Catnip is a kitty cat drug
We plant catnip seeds together
All summer long he watches it growing
Dreaming of the harvest moon
Catnip Dream Catnip Dream Catnip Dream
meow meow meow '

Well this Dribble is getting excessively long...so I go, to the strains of elevator muzak versions of Greensleeves. Just remember, wherever you go, there you are.

Just trying to be,
Flex Mentallo.

Friday, 27/11/98

I wiped the sweat of my brow as I proceeded to hack another vine out of our way.

Out of the corner of my eye, I saw blahnana swipe his machete at a hissing snake, severing its head, leaving it twitching in the grass. I glanced around and saw the programmers, frantically waving away the annoying insects that have been plaguing them for several days now, in some cases flicking the larger bugs to the ground and stomping on them with a look of glee.

The portable universe the programmers have been working on is getting close to completion; the bugs are becoming less of an annoyance as they are slowly put down one by one. The rest of us can now peer through the glassy rectangular prisms that this universe is kept in and can discern different people and buildings, all going about their business.

Occasionally the whole thing will flash blue and completely stop, but they seem confident that its not their fault. Despite that, the world in the glass seems to be nearing perfection - we are all extremely eager to see it in its final form - if we all live that long, that is. The programmers themselves are pushing themselves harder and harder in an effort to speed to the final goal, in some cases trekking ten, twelve hours a day.

The artists are looking grim and tired, yet have that determined glint in their eye. They are near exhaustion, yet continue to plough on and create works of wonder. The recent arrival of a six foot Agrikan Warrior to our party helped to steel our resolve, although he doesn't say much and tends to walk around with a curiously wooden expression. The artists have recently been hard at work constructing vehicles in an attempt to allow us to plow through this savage wilderness a little faster, and today they were unveiled to the "uncultured barbarians", as the rest of us are known to the artists.

The afternoons continue to bring the strange noises on the winds - harsh screams, explosions and small arms fire carries through the air. Occasionally, a bright green ball of fire reaches through the skies, only to explode and bring more screams of rage and pain. So far, we have lost 12 members of the party to this phenomenon; they seem compelled to wander [off] and search for the source and never return.

Still, as the week draws to a close, the few of us that are left manage to put another week of trekking through the dense undergrowth behind us. The pressure mounts, but still, we continue to strive to the ultimate goal - the Mystical Shrine of Hellgate Enlightenment.

· trog

Friday the 4th of December, 1998

The technology train is one of those things that some people just don't see coming as they run backwards and forwards across the tracks.

Sure, they might make it back and forwards a few times before they get hit, but eventually, they get it right between the eyes.

Of course every now and then you have to tie people to the tracks in the interests of filtration of the gene pool...

The Dribbler -- Who says he's not a philosopher at heart? --

Well, a few interesting things this week, including Gribbly and The Pied Piper of web art and I being the recipients of a probable chemical warfare virus that reduced us to debilitated, sapping, simmering shapeless pieces of functionless flesh for a couple of days. Just to beat everyone else here at work to the punchline...

"Really? We couldn't tell the difference" .

I say unto you who laugh like the hyena with a canister of laughing gas up your : All very funny but so far everyone I've asked about the two days I've been away has said "nothing" when asked what has happened over the last couple of days so nyah!

Christmas is well under way (or so the Shopping Centres would have us believe), and so are the Auran christmas decorations in the true spirit of the season. Madame Web (aka Cyber Spice) and Madame Beta have been constructing a massive candy holding device, to be attacked on the night of our annual Christmas party...

Yes, a pináta is to again be the focal point of the celebrations this year. This year, determined to avoid the catastrophe last year whereby the purchased pináta fell apart after Troggy and I bashed it over the head a couple of times, we've reinforced it with kevlar and a titanium shell. Unfortunately, we've discovered after extensive testing that the only useful weapon in the hands of an blinded Auran employee against the super pináta of good is a 3 tonne wrecking ball.

Such is life.

dribbler out.

Friday the 11th of December, 1998

"Day is Never Finished, Master Got Me Working..."

An action packed week, Dribble-fans! In no particular order:

- N. Robin Crosby departed for his home in Vancouver, after spending the last month casting his not-very-beady but certainly critical eye over Hellgate. All aspects of the design were checked for 'Hârníc realism'. Although worrying about 'realism' in a fantasy world might seem like something of a contradiction in terms, one of Hârn's great strengths is its internal consistency-something we are keen (not to mention contractually obligated!) to preserve. As the creator of Hârn, and something of a medieval expert to boot, Robin is uniquely qualified to act as the 'anachronism safety net'.

Of course, Robin performed other key duties such as playing the guitar a lot, getting a grass tick lodged in his ear (ow!) and beating yours truly at Sid Meier's Gettysburg. We'll miss him-at least until he comes back next year :)

- The Software boys continue to pull rabbits out of hats (tada!) as the S.A.G.E. and Hellgate feature set continues to expand. Redoubtable AI engineer Swayze wins the weekly 'non-sequitur' award for his test AI code which caused your peasants to stroll resolutely off the edge of the map, never to return. 3D overlords Cookie and Grrr! strutted their stuff with engine optimizations that gave us a several-hundred-percent speed increase. Very, very pretty.
- Not to be outdone, the Art humanoids circulated avis of some of their most recent work as a Xmas present to the rest of us. Although they upset Alex with their use of the Carmina Burana as 'mere background music', everyone was blown away with the quality of the art.
- Trog and Blahnana managed to escape the building long enough to upgrade our webserver. They were sorely missed for the duration-I had to make my own coffee! Sheesh!
- Live in fear, for tonight is the Auran Xmas party. Yes it's time to get embarrassingly drunk in front of your co-workers! This year's party features a "Heaven and Hell" theme-I'm sure the pop psychologists among us will be very curious to see who picks which. I am cutting straight to the chase-I plan to go as the Old Testament God. I figure I've got a head start, being jealous and wrathful as I am. DJ Killbot will be featuring the musical stylings of the one and only Chef-bringing on the Love Gravy :) CyberSpice and ChocoSpice have been working hard on pinatas all week, and I for one can't wait to bash 'em open to find out what's inside.
- GLDoom was finally released! Time for some retro-gamin' action :)
- We bid farewell to one of our talented artists, Lachlan. We wish him all the best for the future, and will miss him!

That's it for this week-it's been a busy one and I'm exhausted. "Someday Master Set Me Free..."

Gribbly.

Listening to: Wu Tang Clan 'Enter the Wu Tang (36 Chambers)'

Playing: Sid Meier's Gettysburg (PC)

Watching: 'I, Claudius', the BBC Series. Capt. Picard in a toga! Yeah!

Friday the 18th of December, 1998

Alas poor Dribbler, I knew him Horatio!

Well, well it's the last Dribble of the year for 1998...don't worry I'm not gonna start singing Auld Lang Syne or anything...but I'll Dribble on a little more than usual!

Its been a week of action packed action, or at least stupor packed drunkenness. So here we present the countdown of AURAN EVENTS!™

Number One - The Auran Xmas Party.

Yes kids, the Auran Xmas Party once again reared its inebriated head. The Auran Spice Girls set about transforming a corner of the office into...

... H E A V E N and H E L L ...

And what a fine job they did! Three cheers for the Auran Spice Girls! The highlights of the evening from my admittedly hazy point of view were...

(drum roll please)

The indestructible pinada...and the hilarious attempts by our Nordic art viking to destroy it!

Mephisto and his partner storming in with best costumes of the night - Satan and Death! (That was Sandman's sister Death, not Grim Reaper Death!) Haven't seen that much body paint since the last visit to an art commune in Byron Bay!

Feeble attempt by ahem certain parties at breakdancing (we had the cardboard sheets, and I was having flashbacks to Breakdance 2: Electric Boogaloo)!

Killbot, Gribbly and I enjoying the pleasures of a moment in the cool darkness of the mobile beer fridge trailer thingy...hmmn the less said about that one the better!

Meanmuth...(Hmmn better use his more polite nick)... Marlboro Man did a damn fine job of impersonating a devil pimp, although he didn't have a floppy hat with feather, still a fine job all around. Next time - bring those gold chains!

Hmmn, come to think of it, GMan seemed rather comfortable in his role as the Grim Reaper, he was certainly waving that cardboard scythe around a lot...

Plus there was a bevy of Angels, Devils, a Joseph, a Priest and too many others to remember right now...

And last (and certainly least) a late night drunken viewing of Austin Powers - the neighbours won't forget that one any time soon, eh B2. Oh, behave!

Number Two - The Other Stuff That Happened at Work

Lets see...Monday saw the institution of demo day...everyone (and I mean EVERYONE) gathers at my mess of a desk (Artists have the biggest monitors, don't you know) to check out what the programmers are up to with Hellgate and S.A.G.E. Hellgate's looking mighty fine...I guess those programmers were doing something after all!

Also, the amazing bouncing sheep demo was being shown at the desk of the programmer now known as BlahBlahBlackSheep...way to go, I just love to watch that sheep bounce! Watch out for the bouncing sheep in Hellgate, I'm sure we'll find somewhere to sneak it in! Right, guys? Right?

Interchat game of the week - Pokemon battles with B2 : Pikachu vs Snorlax. Squirtle vs Porygon. JigglyPuff vs. good taste! I wanna be a Pokemon master!!!

Number Three - What's Coming Up?

Many of the crew are heading off to parts far and wide for the upcoming Chrissy break, two weeks of fun in the sun for all! (except for the Swedish guys that have gone home for Xmas, guess it'll be fun in the snow for them! And for Gribbly, heading off on an expedition to China!) YAY!

Next year - well Hellgate will really start cranking when we get back, we'll have the joys of crunch time and torturing, ermm interacting with beta testers, plus there'll be some new projects coming along (if you want to know what they may be, try checking the out the rest of the web site 8) !!!)

So Hell Dribble will return in the New Year, same bat time, same bat channel, same bunch of Dribblers!

As Austin Powers says,
"Hey, there you are!"
"Do I know you?"
"No, but there you are!"

Seeya next year groovers!

Flex Mentallo, returning to the Phantom Zone for two weeks to replenish my strength!

Friday, 08 January, 1999

Another week draws to a close, and as the sun slowly sets behind the Brisbane skyline, the troops of Auran continue to trailblaze onward.

We've just come back from a refreshing two week vacation, and have gotten straight back into hardcore production. The programmers have recently been put on a steady ration of caffiene and, unbeknownst to them, several illegal stimulants, and they are all working extra hours, staring at their monitors with wide open eyes for days at a time, as the characters elusively dance around the screen and their fingers work their magic across the keyboard.

On the other side of the building, a never-ending stack of papers is growing in reception, as millions upon millions (read: hundreds) of betatester applications flood our building. Our new receptionist, Barbie(TM), has been processing them all, weeding out all you freaks and sickos that tried to get in. The selection process has begun - who will be the lucky few who shall earn the right to come in and spend several days testing Hellgate? At this point, I guess its only fair to mention the new QA Manager who has just arrived from down south (amusing nickname pending).

The lead Hellgate designer is still absent; he's currently exploring China and is due back in a week or two. I'm just hoping that shortly after he returns we're not going to be hearing tale of Hellgate units walking around saying "All peasants are equal, but some are more equal than others" and the game itself having a lot more red textures than it used to.

Aside from that, not much new to report. Everyone has had a nice long break and has come back rested and fresh (at least after the shock of getting up before 11am again wore off). The game continues to evolve, as it reaches towards alpha, and looks better every day. Betateesting should begin soon, and then we'll be full-steam-ahead towards having the game finished. Meanwhile, stay tuned, same Bat-time, same Bat-channel, same Bat-website.

--trog

Friday, 15 January, 1999

The dribble is like a flower. It has petals, a stem, starts from a bud, likes bees...

Err... a flower is like a flower. The dribble is more like the alien that comes down from outer space. It comes down, asks to be taken to the leader, gets dissected and sold to the highest bidder as a talk show host...

Actually, I think the dribble is more like staying up and watching television when you're dead tired; even though you know you're waaaaay to exhausted to keep watching, you actually find it easier to keep watching than expend the effort to fall asleep.

Enough chit chat, down to business.

The lead Hellgate designer sent us back some holiday email with a nice photograph attached, which would have ordinarily been excellent, but the photo was of him lying in a cot in a Chinese hospital, having contracted a violent strain of the flu. Doh! Get well soon Gribbly. Btw everyone, I've got dibs on his collection of famous star's belly button lint if he dies (Sorry Gribbly :).

Other than that, everything's been pretty much noses to the grindstone kind of stuff. Troggy moved out into the Hellgate area to work on scripting for the S.A.G.E. engine, and has been even more impressed with it since he did so. He mentioned something about "playing with the dogs" but I don't know whether he meant virtually or literally, and I don't really want to know either. One of our artists got busted viewing "kitty porn" while researching for a model (Troggy's gag, not mine:).

The weather here in Brisbane is driving most of us nuts (it's either stinking hot or pouring rain... can't seem to win), but that's life in the sub-tropics I suppose :)

Our new QA manager is prowling for hardware, so if you've got cutting edge hardware you want working with our game, give us a bell :) Note that we've got enough thermo-nuclear devices, so don't bother sending any more of those:)

Until next time,

dribbler out.

Friday, 22 January, 1999

"Looky looky yonder... looky looky yonder..."

The beast it cometh, cometh down, and you know I'm talking about the Alpha milestone here, folks. That's right, Hellgate (...or is it?) is on the home stretch to Alpha. So the whole Hellgate (...?) team is working extra hard, and producing results commensurate with their efforts. You want evidence? Well, yesterday we survived a demo to the directors. The game behaved impeccably (except for the peasants who can walk in their sleep... we really must fix that...), and the directors seem likely to continue to do those directorial things like pay our wages and other, far less important, stuff.

I've only just got back from a sojourn in the PRC, Xi'an in Shanxi Province to be exact. The Dribbler kindly mentioned my virulent Chinese 'flu, so I'll spare you the details like the pustulent mouth sores, the 40 degree (C) fever and the many, many injections in the... er, anyway it was great to come back and see the advances the team had made in the game. Entertainingly, I had some rather vivid feverish hallucinations of Hellgate (...or is it?) while I was ill. There's been some resistance to incorporating some of the great design ideas I hallucinated though -- apparently giant purple mechanical cats chasing tiny wooden mice aren't authentically medieval. Details, details! Highlight of the trip, if I may be even more self indulgent than usual, was visiting the Shaloin Temple in Henan Province. The history! The kung fu monks! The crappy merchandise of which I bought so much! The thousands of tough-ass little Chinese kids learning kung fu in the many, many schools that surround the temple! A unique place.

Our numbers continue to swell as ex-Melbournite, J-Pop enthusiast and Spice Girls nut XFlibble (it's French) joins us as Lead Tester. We welcome him to the ranks. He will be head nitpicker, and will also be co-ordinating all the sub-nitpickers in the Beta testing program. So if you've applied to be in the Beta test, XFlibble (maybe it's Spanish) is the man you should suck up to.

Big news of the week is probably the fact that Hellgate (...?) is almost certainly not going to be called Hellgate for much longer. To be honest, we're not 100% sure what we're going to call it. Suggestions to bgates@microsoft.com. So, you heard it here first: "Name Change Imminent for Auran Game!" Hold the front page...

Well, work beckons so I best be off. Till next time remember the words of Kurt Vonnegut: "We are here on Earth to fart around. Don't let anyone tell you different!"

Gribbly.

Listening to: Nil 'Chemical Beatnik'

Playing: Zelda (N64)

Watching: Drunken Master I & II VCDs from China! That's the stuff :)

Friday, 29 January, 1999

E Pluribus Dribblus!!! Et Tu Hellgate!!!

Well The Game Soon to be Formerly Known as Hellgate (herein abbreviated to TGStbFKaH), and the team has survived its toughest test yet. Yes...the air-con was busted this morning, mid-summer in the tropics of Brisbane. Thankfully crack air-con squads were on the scene quickly and fixed the cooling tower with only a minor exchange of angry emails to show for it...It was close, a few more hours of that and things could have gotten ugly.

But the cool air has once again returned us to a serene and Zen-like state...

Mmmn...air-conditioning...

Which makes you wonder if a butterfly flapping its wings in Africa was affecting our air-con cooling tower...hmmn well I wonder about these things...

Anyway, onto TGStbFKaH! Well the programmers are working, working, working at the moment, surging ahead into the Alpha big bang...Lotsa groovalicious stuff is going into the game, and SAGE is also coming along swimmingly at the same time (we non-programmer's just have to assume that this is the case since there's cool new stuff in TGStbFKaH, TGStbFKaH uses SAGE, ipso facto there's cool new stuff in S.A.G.E. 8)

I'm still not entirely sure that peasants saying 'I love programming S.A.G.E. script' is an authentic medieval statement, but what do I know?

What else...hmmn...

Well we have another new staffer to introduce, the marketer with the mostest, now known as Big Red. She's going to be the one responsible for the TGStbFKaH hats, posters, action figures, boxer shorts, cereals and jammies that will appear in a Store Near You(tm) around release time (No, I can't tell you when that is, okay, okay, how about Sometime In The Future. You can quote me on that!).

Well, that's a lot of Dribble, and I forgot to tuck in a napkin, so I'd better get going before things get too messy around here.

Listening to - Nothing much, the hum of the air-con mostly

Watching - Sailor Moon (actually Lovely Soldier Sailor Moon) repeats when I can

Wishing I Was Watching - Repeats of Sigmund the Sea Monster and BJ and the Bear

Reading - Maus, A Survivor's Tale - remember kids, comics are literature, just with pictures 8)

Sitting Next To - Big Red and an Empty Desk

Trying to Finish - Legend Of Zelda and Quake 2 Single Player

Trying to Start - Baldur's Gate

Waiting for - Godot

Drinking - too much DNA altering NutraSweet in Diet Coke whilst at work

Thinking about - finishing Dribble.

Y'all come back ya hear.

Just trying to be...

Flex Mentallo!

Friday, 5 February, 1999

Another week closer, another 412.6 litres of caffeine products, and another set of build goals complete.
Well, almost. Still a few to go, but they'll make it in over the weekend (surely).

My own job has changed a bit since my last dribble - I've now moved out into the Pit of Programmers to work on the game directly now. This has proved to be both interesting and challenging, except for the hard work and late nights, which, of course, suck. Anyway, its gotten me out of range of blahnana's singing, which was beginning to feel like having a nailgun fired into my ears.

As we get closer and closer to alpha, more and more features are creeping into the game. On one side of the map, we've got units getting trained and outfitted with spears and shields, on the other we've got predator animals hunting down the cute little bunny rabbits for food, and in a forgotten corner, a lone peasant tries to figure out how to get on his horse without facing the wrong way. We've got knights starting to clash swords together and nocking arrows into bows as the combat system starts poking its head into the world of (insert game name here), and all sorts of other wonderful and neat things.

The artists, as usual, are sitting around doing nothing looking at pictures and passing weird judgements about the lighting and other stuff. Well, not really - I guess we're keeping them busy enough making them do art revisions, tweaking some animations and adding some new bits and pieces.

The arrival of several new graphics cards have left several programmers glancing eagerly in their direction, practically chomping at the bit to get some new hardware in their PCs. A space has been cleared so that we can just throw them into a pit and let those interested fight their way to the booty.

Aside from that, things are pretty much the same: everyone is still working flat out to get this thing done. The engine programmers especially are putting in a stellar effort to add new features and glue everything together. We're all eagerly hanging out for the day when we can stay back at work and have a real bash at our own creation.

Until next time... oh yeah.. since its become hip to list what I've been listening to/watching, etc..

Listening to: Triple J

Watching: FoxTel (channel surfing rules)

Playing: Sim City 3000 and Quake 2 (CTF)

Not playing: Zelda64 emulated on the PC (that would be naughty)

Friday, 12 February, 1999

[Sung to the tune of Jingle Bells]

So I wind down my window.

"Hello", he says.

"Hello", I say.

"You're not the guy I'm looking for", he says.

"I'm not the guy you're looking for", I say.

"Good bye", he laughs.

"Yes", I say, and wind my window back up.

Word's don't fit the tune? Country Music 101 with the dribbler.

TGStbFKaH Dribble, 12th February, 1999.

Well, there's not loads of fascinating information to give away in today's dribble, but there are a few things to mention. Our new QA manager has been doing a sterling job of sucking hardware companies dry of their stocks of both outdated and state-o-the-[mona-lisa] goodies. Graphics cards, sound cards, speakers, swimsuit models (compatibility issues, you understand), are turning his office into a territorial fight for his life as they line the walls. It's good to see all this hardware, although it's starting to make me wish changing video cards was as easy as falling off a bike :)

TGStbFKaH is starting to really get my ears perked up now, and I'm starting to understand the weekly changing buzzwords -- "Today's buzzword is "Itinerant Peasant" -- which is so top secret it's been written on the back of the toilet

door (right next to the entire words to "Time me kangaroo down sport" backwards -- I don't want to even know who's responsible for that... I'm just hoping no emulation of the wobble board sounds went on). We're ramping up to get the next demonstration ready, which is making the team so busy, some really strange things are happening. A good example of this is the RAL (resident Amiga lover, for those who came in late) has even tidied up his desk, and pulled out the 12 seater - 3 course set of dirty dining wear hidden around him in various places. Of course, he only put it all in a pile, and hasn't done anything about it, but I'm not sure that that wouldn't blow my mind anyway... :)

Anyway, that's about all for today peoples, back to the grind. Remember: Eat the CABBAGE!

dribbler.

Listening To: Far too much of "Pretty Fly for a White Guy" (It rocked the first 5000 times).

Trying to avoid listening to: Any more repetitions of Prince's "Tonight we're gonna party like it's 1999". It's going to be tough, but it might save a lot of lives.

19th February 1999

"I only gave him a drink because the cigarette burned his throat!"

- Henry Fool, on nurturing his six year old son.

Yes, its that time again - except that I have been press ganged into Dribble service a week ahead of schedule. That Gribbly - he's *ahem* too busy to do it this week...

Well things have been running riot around here the last few weeks, as a major pre-alpha demo looms next week. The bad thing about this is that there's lots of extra work to do...the good part is that lots of groovalicious new stuff goes into the game. Lots of game components are being pulled together in this demo, so it's really looking very sweet!

Mmmn...demo...brain...wandering...back....last.....Saturday....

During our 18 hours of working fun last Saturday, Gribbly, Xflibble(it's Ukrainian), Strontium and myself went to Chinatown for dinner, and enjoyed the mysteries of crap side-show stalls and tasty food that seem to be at the heart of the Year of the Rabbit. Hmmn, there's rabbits in (TGFKA)Hellgate, so I'll guess we'll do well in Asia this year!!! Xflibble (it's Yiddish) picked up a quality inflatable Hammer with squeaky whistle built in. On the way back to work, I made the mistake of dissing the Pet Shop Boys, and I thought I was in for a thrashing from an Xflibble(it's a Num Shab)/Squeaky hammer combo...

But luckily I awoke just in time...Anyway, back to the less dribbly dribble...

A chunk of the first game mission is going to be in this demo, with a big dose of functionality and hopefully a small dose of crashadelica being thrown into that tasty (TGFKA)Hellgate soup. Mmmn Hellgate soup...tasty!!

So what is the recipe in this tasty game feast - well there's eleven secret herbs and spices, plus all of the meat and potatoes that other games have. Really, if Hellgate were a soup, it be loosely based on a traditional soup, created in a fantastic, high tech ceramic pot, incorporating all the basic vegetables that every soup has these days, but with a couple of exotic new veges, a raft of newly invented spices, and some unexpected combinations of flavours.

What am I talking about? You BE the judge! Fnord!

Well that'll do for today. Here's my list of things for the week...

Listening to - 'Please To See The King' by Steeleye Span
(I am not a bloody hippy! So what if I like prog rock and folk music!)

Watching - Celebrity Deathmatch
(Oh my God! Hilary Clinton just kicked Monica Lewinsky in the Head!)

Playing - With the London Philharmonic next week...

(I'm gonna play the wobble board, just like my hero Rolf Harris! Tie me kangaroo down, sport...)

Reading - Sebastian O by Grant Morrison

(If you read comics and you don't like Grant Morrison you're an idiot! The Invisibles, baby, yeah. Superfluid universes intersecting with four dimensional reality!)

Just trying to be...

Flex Mentallo

25th February 1999

Roll up! Roll up! The Media Circus is in Town!

First: No name change action yet! I know we promised news on this a few weeks back, but just to keep you up to date, there hasn't been any official decision made as yet (no matter what the enthusiastic folks at PlayNOW! might have you believe =p). We will keep you posted, never fear.

This week has been something of a media circus -- in a good way. First we had some... international guests (mysterious enough for ya?) who came to check out the S.A.G.E. Engine and Hellgate. They spent many happy hours casting a critical eye over proceedings, and asking all sorts of difficult questions that sent me trotting off to Systems Analyst Mephistu every half hour. At the end of their three day stay they had had their noses in every area of Sage and Hellgate, and pronounced themselves well satisfied!

On Tuesday Steve Polak -- surely Australia's most published video games journalist -- ran an article on Auran and Hellgate in "The Australian". And very flattering it was too! The story doesn't seem to have been archived on The Australian's website, but if you want to go try and find it (perhaps you're more of a search engine ninja than me) it was called "Hellgate opens up complex strategies" by Steve Polak. One funny thing though -- the article states that I have been playing Harn for "for the past twenty five years or so". I hope "or so" means "give or take twenty three years", since

- I'm 26, and haven't been playing anything except my worn vinyl copy of Electric Coconut's "Popcorn" for more than twenty years, and
- I've only been playing Harn for the last two years. Still, his heart is in the right place! We loves ya Steve.

Then on Thursday we were in The Australian again! What media darlings we are -- this time it was a story on the Brisbane IT industry. Xflibble (I have it on good authority that it's actually Laosian) and myself were interviewed, seeing as we are both ex-pat southerners (we both moved up from Melbourne). I think the idea was that we would diss our former home state, painting a glowing picture of QLD as the hub of the Australian IT industry. Instead Xflibble (Old French?) and I both opined that it didn't make much difference to us, and we thought that the IT industry was "pretty much the same everywhere". Of course the mere fact that your interviewee didn't say the "right things" is no obstacle to an enterprising journalist. Check the story out here :) He calls me a "sandal wearing games designer"! Let me take this opportunity to call him a pencil pushing hack! (note to "The Australian" legal representatives: I'm joking).

Anyway, Thursday also saw us hosting the crew of local kids TV show "Y?" (yes, that's what it's called). They filmed the programmers in various stages of undress... no wait that was a dream I had... they filmed the various stages of game design, and I was asked to provide a summary of the game development process. Time was limited (apparently we get a 2-3 minute slot on the show, which will be airing on Channel 9 in May... I think), so it came out as something like: "You think of a game idea. You have a meeting, and draw some pictures. Then the programmers do some stuff. And then it's done!" So there you go -- complete step-by-step instructions for constructing your very own video game out of craft wood and glue (don't sniff the glue unless you want to make Parappa the Rapper, Tempest 2000 or Puzzle Bobble 3).

After all this excitement, it is pleasing to note that some work actually got done as well (mostly by people who aren't me). The aforementioned demo contained some never before seen features, including b2's totally entrancing "Summon Death Rabbits" spell. Whether or not this spell is in the release version of the game is, er, to be determined :) No b2, I didn't mean it! Of course we're keeping it! Arrgh!

Game over.

Gribbly.

Listening to: "Teenager of the Year", Frank Black -- the man can sing!

Playing: "Octopus" (Nintendo Game&Watch emulator)

Watching: "The 40th Annual Grammy Awards" -- did Ricky Martin rock the house, or what? Does Whitney Houston suck, or what?

5th March 1999

Well, its Friday again.

Immediately upon our arrival to the Auran Mothership today we were assailed by the horrible news that the Food Nazis were trying to take our regular Indian lunch away. Needless to say, the Forces of Good And Pure struck back quickly, and we returned to our regular state of bimonthly hot curry lunches. Apparently, the main reason for not wanting Indian (if you can imagine such a bizarre mindset) is the extreme oppressive heat of this week - our airconditioning broke early in the week, so we've been enduring Saharian-like temperatures and typical Queensland humidity. The arrival of a dozen industrial fans has made the place definitely windier and noiser, but we're all praying for the day of the return of the air conditioning.

Not a particularly active week; however we did manage to accomplish quite a bit. Vast amounts of task-scheduling has been happening in the office of our Organisator ("Producer", in layman's terms). This has led to general panic as people have seen how much work they had to do. Fortunately, the excess tasks were things like "Paint Producer's House" and "Wax Producer's Car" - once we'd stripped them out, it looked a lot better. Unfortunately, we didn't realise until we'd stripped half her house of paint...

The main event of the week was the near-complete segregation of the Hellgate and S.A.G.E. teams. More of a conceptual division than anything else, it is nonetheless a significantly different approach to our previous design/implementation model. Basically, we're getting new engine builds a lot less frequently, which allows us to concentrate on fully implementing certain things in the current engine build without having to worry about new features causing problems. I guess the most visible change so far has been that the Hellgate team is now sitting together (instead of being spaced out all over the place). This makes communication between team members a lot easier - at least, it did until we got gale-force winds courtesy of our industrial fans.

Aside from that, a pretty quiet week. Lots of game clean up (removal of dead code, replacing obsolete systems, etc) took place on the engine side. Blahnana and I have spent several hours trying to diagnose several blue screen o' death errors on several brand new artist PCs, which, although it might sound like fun, isn't. So far, we've narrowed it down to either 3D Studio Max, Photoshop, Windows NT, the Pentium II CPU, the motherboard, the hard drive, the power supply, the case, or the floor. I'm sure we'll figure it out soon.

I'd like to take this opportunity to say farewell to one of our receptionists, Bianca, who is leaving us for those different-coloured pastures (green, or so I'm told). She's been without a doubt the most effective and efficient person in an office I've ever seen, and we're going to sorely miss her. Best of luck in the future Bianca!

--trog

Watching: nothing

Listening to: Vast - Touched.mp3

Reading: The Belgariad, by David Eddings

Playing: Quake 2 CTF

Not Playing: Quake 3 Arena IHV Test

Doing: pouring cups of water over my head to stay cool

Thinking about: playing Quake (its a drug, I'm addicted, ok?)

12th March 1999

Nagging. It's that noise in your ear that just won't go away.

Whether it's your wife, your girlfriend, your pet, or someone who just likes to annoy you to get this weeks dribble.

Airconditioning's one of those things you take for granted when you work in an airconditioned building five days of every week. Luckily for us, ours followed Murphy's law to the letter and decided to throw itself onto the flaming coals of a rather hot campfire at around the same time that someone decided to roast the city of Brisbane under a large magnifying glass.

After 5 days of scorching weather with killer humidity, Brisbane returned to normal weather, and luckily for us, our airconditioning started working again as soon as the humidity dropped with the temperature. We hired some Industrial-Strength fans of Tornadoes to try and combat the sheer force of the heat, but they only succeeded in turning the building into an open wasteland of flying documents and rice bubbles and made the whole floor sound like we were riding on top of a giant hummingbird. If I don't sound like I'm being funny, it's because after having the life drained out of me for 5 days, I'm not.

Life came back to me in a rush today though, with the release of that sweeeeeeeeeet looking mov from those brainiacs at Lucasfilm. I've been trading saber slashes with Flex Mentallo at an even higher ratio than normal all day :). Btw, for those of you who haven't grabbed the 25mb sucker, geddit! It's amazingly superior looking to the 320 one.

And that's all I have to say about that.

dribbler.

lifeanddeathandlifeand deathandlifeanddeathandyingandyangand soupandchicken
andnoodlesandlettuceonlargesteamingroll

Watching: The 2nd Starwars Trailer over and over. (Maybe if I watch it enough times I'll feel like I'm really there).
Listening: Harvey Danger - Flagpole Sitta

19th March 1999

You ain't gonna sell two copies if you press a double album!"

Ah, yes, much rejoicing has accompanied the release, finally, of Eminem's "debut" CD in Australia. Well, much rejoicing for me, anyway, as most of the HG crew seem to find Eminem less-than-pleasurable. Except Design-humanoid Spray'N'Wipe, who after much whingeing and wrinking his nose mailed me asking if he could borrow the album. Ah, the irony.

This week has also seen many fierce Digimon battles between Auran employess who surely have something better to do? My Digimon takes the "Sage of the Mountain" award for being long-lived (19 years!), X-Flibble's the "Mike Tyson" award for being the toughest, and Flex's the "Other Mike Tyson" award for being entirely unwilling to evolve beyond a neckless blob. X-Flibble and I are both onto our second generation Digimons, so we're trying different "nature vs. nurture" strategies.

X-Flibble is trying to create a sluglike Digimon by a) never cleaning its cage and b) leaving the lights off all the time. I'm trying to create the Digimon version of Tweak ("Argh! Too much pressure!!!") by feeding mine nothing but vitamins and leaving the lights on 24 hours a day.

Oh? Hellgate? That's why you're at this website in the first place? Sorry... to tell you the truth it's been a week of slow progress. First some major engine overhauling (adding some funky new functionality, but unfortunately breaking some of the funky old functionality in the process) put us in damage control mode for a while. Then -- and it's time for a moment of silence, Dribble-fans -- we had some staff reshuffling, and bid adieu to Jamamoto, Yakob, B2, Mr. Spock, and Miss America. On behalf of all the staff here at Auran, I'd like to wish each of them all the very best for the future -- they will be missed.

On a lighter note, the airconditioning is castors-up again. Heh heh... oh. So it's 9,000 degrees (Celcius) in the office. However, this is a voluntary offlining, as we are having the whole cooling tower (a massive structure weighing several tonnes perched precariously on the roof) replaced. Krystal, the 'Dozer and myself abandoned a meeting earlier when we realized that the back boardroom is directly under the section of roof where the crane was putting the tower...

In other work environment enhancement news, the office is once again resounding to the sound of hammering, power sawing and general construction-y type noises as a large crew of construction-y types eviscerate the rear half of the

building. This is in preparation for the final stages of our new, ultra-advanced digital studio facility. So that's pretty exciting!

Apart from that, not much other news. Take care out there, folks -- the owls are not what they seem.

Gribbly

Listening to: Eminem!

Watching: PokéMon, 'coz I want to be the very best.

Playing: LFire CTF Mod. The jury's still out, but the coloured quad rules...

26th March 1999

Hell Dribble, Episode 317 - 'In the Darkest, Driest Reaches of Australia!'

Welcome to another exciting tale in the saga of Hell Dribble! Last time, you'll remember our hero was left in a trying predicament, tapping at his keyboard, writing some sort of drivel, err.. Dribble. Want to know what happens next, gentle reader? Well, then, read on!

What ho, Horatio?

Well, our intrepid programmers are concentrating on making S.A.G.E. an uncrashable, super featured beast at the moment, whilst the artistes continue on with Hellgate shtuff.

Marlboro Man has been putting some jolly swell textures into the game for the skies, clouds and day/night transitions. Look out Zelda 64 (no pressure there, Marlboro!). Meanwhile, I have been exploring the mysteries of the ASCII character set (cue Dark Reign flashbacks), only to discover that the Euro Dollar symbol has been introduced. Personally I think the whole ASCII Character Set is overrated, and there should be just Normal characters, Foreign characters (wouldn't dream of offending our non-English speaking custome..err friends) and Punctuation in the base font set. All of those other weird arse symbols should be in Wingdings or Symbol or one of those other silly fonts. Hmmn, got a bit carried away there...annnywaaayyy...

Back to Hellgate, I'd like to explain to you, dear reader, some of the processes involved in the creation of this project. Developing an Engine and a Game concurrently is not the easiest of tasks, and I'd like to discuss the relationship between the two in a rational and considered manner. Just like John and Ponch, BJ and the Bear, Bo and Luke Duke, Sigmund the Sea Monster and those two kids, Electro Woman and Dyna Girl, the Captain and Tenille and all of those other fine duos, the Game and the Engine have to work like a harmoniously intertwined, umm, err, umm, thing, whilst still each being able to stand on their own two feet...

Hmmn, I think there's a fundamental flaw in my logic here. John without Ponch, BJ and no Bear...hmmn these things are unheard of. What am i trying to say? I don't know! That's why its called Dribble! Maybe I shouldn't have had that Fugu fish Sushi for lunch. I feel weak...weak..everything's spinning...*bzztt*

bzzt ...vzzzz... *bzzt*

A long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away...

Flex : Blah! Blaaaahhhnnnaannna! Now I am the master!

ZZZHhhhhinnnn! (lightsaber noise)

Flex : En garde!

Blah : Sabre-CHOP!

Blah : Blah Nanawalker swiftly positions his sabre and body in the 3rd Jedi advanced position of defence, channelling Flex Vader's attacking energy out and away from the path of destruction it was on with a combination of force will and

brute strength. As Flex's body was twisted around, Blah jumped in with a swinging attack aimed at the weak link in Flex's armour... his girdle.

Flex : Whilst the girdle was his weak point, Darth Flex was so in tune with the force that he allowed Blah Nanawalker to slice through him, and became One with the Force. He was now Emperor Flex ruler of the galaxy far, far away! By becoming one with the Force, Emperor Flex could use the deadly Force Grip on Blah Nanawalker's throat. As Nanawalker flailed about with his lightsaber, slicing at the ghost like Emperor Flex, he could only hear the Emperor's gloating words,

"Blah! Blah! You may be the son of Nanawalker, but you should have had your Jedi TechSupporters install that Matrox Millenium Falcon into my Peetoo (P2) Unit."

Blah Nanawalker began to black out...

To Be Continued...

Next Time on Hell Dribble - John and Ponch cruise the California highways, but are waylaid by a band of enraged transexual Elvis impersonators, who are, by coincidence, on their way to preside over the wedding of Daisy Duke to Boss Hogg (it's one of those weird hillbilly things). Meanwhile, Sigmund the Sea Monster is suffering from dehydration (again), and must learn to windsurf if he is to live. The whereabouts of the Banana Splits is still unknown. Rumour has it that they may return with a new title for the game in Season 3 of Hell Dribble.

Watching : Red Dwarf 8 (YAY! It's funny again!)

Reading : The White Company, by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

Listening to : Soundtrack for Flirt, by the man, Hal Hartley.

1st April 1999

Ahhhh, 4 day working weeks.

There's nothing quite like them... except 3 day weeks. And 2 day weeks. Anyway, the dribble is presented to you a day early, courtesy of that season called Easter. It's been a fairly quiet week this week, game development wise. Everyone is pretty much anxiously awaiting a new build of the engine so we can start playing with some of the neato new features that are going in. Something else that's going in is our spiffy new bathroom facilities, upgrading on our current hole-in-the-floor-with-a-curtain-around-it situation.

The Disaster of the Week occurred on Tuesday this week, when the Airconditioners of Doom once again broke down, this time leaking several thousand litres of water and doing quite a bit of damage. So, once again, everyone is sitting around with nothing but bikini-clad supermodels to keep us cool. Oh, wait, that's a Breaka-induced hallucination, it's actually blahnana waving at me through his glass cage. So, actually, there's nothing to keep us cool.

There's bit a slight paradigm shift here afterhours - we've got some people starting to play Tribes instead of Quake 2. Admittedly Tribes seems pretty cool, but hey.. Its Just Not Quake (tm). I've got Team Fortress Classic now, and I'm hoping to get a few people playing that - looks like a nice balance point between Tribes and Quake 2. Aside from this, I'm keenly anticipating the Q3Arena test, due out soon-ish.

Today also marks the second anniversary of the Auran Easter Egg hunt. Dozens of eggs (well, ok, paper cutouts of eggs) have been placed around the vastness of the Auran space-time domain by our skilful Bunny Team. Basically, whoever can collect the most eggs is in line for a great big chocolate bundle of joy. Egg couples may be handed in for a single chocolate egg. Hopefully we'll avoid a repeat of last year - the obvious flaw in a paper egg is that it can be photocopied. The Bunny Team got a little suspicious last year when a certain individual presented them with approximately 10 times as many eggs as they had actually laid down...

Aside from all this, it's been a pretty normal week. The coding team are continuing to work madly on the core engine technology. Some of the art and animations are being redone, giving us more detail and better looking models in general. Everything is still coming together, but each week we're starting to look more and more like we've got a game instead of a random collection of standalone complex subsystems.

Listening to: Vast - Visual Audio Sensory Theater

Watching: Ghostbusters and Ghostbusters 2 ("Try to imagine all life as you know it stopping instantaneously and every particle in your body exploding at the speed of light.")

--trog

9th April 1999

Sitting at his computer, the cyber-surfer hacker taps away at his keyboard, the cold pizza sitting in an open box to his left every now and then gracing his lips, warm coke following it down.

He goes by the computer alias Junket, and he's the greatest hacker this side of the hallway. In his career, has

- hacked into and taken down 2 sewage pre-processing plants (the first one was a bit close to home... he spent 3 weeks visiting the public toilets at a nearby subway along with the rest of his block when their toilets backed up -- nothing like learning from your mistakes when you contract dysentery after contaminating your own drinking water),
- a street sweeping truck (not an easy task -- the Garbo anti-hacker intelligence was upgraded after Shenahva hacked the central mainframe and made them perform the nutcracker suite continuously in central park -- he had to bounce his signal through three schools and the lifesupport system in a retirement home to allow sufficient time for the hack), and
- the coke machine one the corner of west and maine. Know how frustrating it is when the guy in front of you gets the last can? He made it so every time a can popped out, the "unavailable" light came for for 3 minutes, causing several brawls. He also made it broadcast a continous "out of day-glo_orange_suspenders" signal to main office. 10 trucks came out to refill the machine before the hack was realised.

Yes, we went and saw the matrix last night, and thoroughly enjoyed it. It's to the point now when Flex and I have the option of either assuming "guard" pose with a lightsaber, or picking a random kung-fu position and shrieking "wahaaaaaaa" in falsetto voices. If you haven't seen it, go see it.

Life flows on... I've been saved by Indian for lunch today, it was feared that after Indian was rescheduled to once a month, and should have occured last Friday (a public holiday), that we would have missed out for this month. Luckily, some bright cookie realised this and arranged for the feast of Indian to arrive this week instead. Thank goodness for forward thinking individuals.

S.A.G.E. grows like the bloom it is. It continues to evolve with neato new terrains going in this week.

The dudes are in fixing our Air conditioning piping this week. The week started off with the smell of an oxy-torch, as we were amazed to watch professionals use crackpipes. These guys didn't take hits from any ordinary handheld crackpipe, but furnished an entire building with pipes to get their fix, and with the aid of the oxy torch and a large set of lungs, had a lot more fun that I ever thought possible.

After taking turns on the crack-"tunnel" as it were, they proceeded to climb onto an electric cart with a platform that goes up and down, and drove it all around the office at the scorching speed of a metre a minute. Luckily, the high-pitched whine of the cart drowned out the banging sound of the new toilets being built (but not the banging sound of my head on the table).

And now... I must cast my mind back along another plane, to a galaxy far, far, away,

Gag... *gasp*...

When we last saw our hero, he was slowly going unconscious in the force grip of the evil Flex Vader.

Gag...

wheeze...

Suddenly, Blah remembered the advice given to him by his mentor during his training... "do not bend the spoon, for that is impossible. Focus instead on the fact that it isn't really a spoon". Realising this, Blah started to warp reality, liquefying his body until he was but a puddle, and Flex was grasping only air. Morphing back to his normal state, he forced his astral self to leave his body, to join Flex on a higher plane.

Only this time, he brought guns, and lots of them. Grabbing something rather large and well stocked with ammo, Blah faced Flex on the astral plane. Blah suddenly realised that up here, on this plane, Flex only existed because he, Blah, knew he did. Not knowing why he did what he did next, blah put the gun into his mouth and pulled the trigger.

Tune in next time for the next amazing episode of "The Incredible Blah! and his sidekick Mr Ed, the obsessive compulsive talking Horse".

Dribbler out

16th April 1999

"I scream, you scream, we all scream..."

Sometimes you eat so much icecream that the thought of eating more icecream is not appealing. Other times you can't get any icecream, and then you want to eat icecream just about more than anything else in the world. But best is when you get just the right amount of icecream. Am I right?

Anyway, like swirls of delicious gelati coiling into a freshly made wafer cone, the arcane lore of SAGE was poured into our brains this week at the first "S.A.G.E. Day" S.A.G.E. Seminar. A project the size of SAGE is not easy to comprehend, and it took a full day for SAGE bwana Mephistu to explain the ins and outs of S.A.G.E., what it could and couldn't do right now, and what it would and wouldn't be able to do in the future (it can't make icecream, for example).

He spoke for six hours straight with only two pages of notes, a glass of water and a heart shaped lollipop with a disconcertingly salty centre to sustain him. Actually, those lollipops (which ChocoSpice has been pushing since Valentine's Day -- do those things have a use by date or what!?) are clearly a metaphor for love gone wrong... appealingly cute and sweet on the outside, then all... er... moist (sorry), then suddenly salty and bitter at the core. And what are you left with? Nothing but a bitter aftertaste and a little plastic stick. Hmmm... Incidentally, did you knw that the confectionary industry term for "how firmly a lollipop adheres to its stick" is "snugness"? Well, that's why you read Dribble each week isn't it?

Where was I? Oh yeah, SAGE day. While the programmers hammered away at the actual code, we "non-technical" staff (designers, artists, admin and... other?) got the goods on the what, when, and how of SAGE. And let me tell you right now -- S.A.G.E. is surely the mother of all game authoring systems. Or at least the gum-snappin' older sister who won't lend you her tube skirt, or those dangly triangular white plastic earrings that you so jealously covet. In short -- it kicks ten different varieties of butt (no, I'm not going to list the varieties. I have my limits.). Or to use an earlier, even less appropriate metaphor, it is a Bacci® Dual Chocolate Indulgence with High Viscosity Caramel Swirl and Gold Plated Pistachio Nuts icecream in a world of Rum'n'Raisin, Choc Chip and Neapolitan.

OK what else. On the Hellgate front we saw some advances in the pathsearching system, some new sky an environment stuff, and tweaks to the combat system by scripting maestro Phoenix. Very pretty, folks...

The only other news is the wave of Tribes addiction sweeping the office, much to the dismay of Trog (who wants us to play TFC with him... heh...) and Alex ("give me Q2 or give me death!"). Still, sensible folk acknowledge that Tribes is the MP game of choice, at least until Q3A (I think the Second Coming would go more or less unnoticed amidst the imminent Q3A (and, of course) Episode 1 madness). Many fine after (and before) hours games have been enjoyed, with a certain someone inflicting much misery on his colleagues with the laser rifle... :)

Oh and one more thing! This week CEO Maneus featured in an IT article in "The Australian" (*mumble* call _me_ a "sandal wearing games designer"... why I oughta *mumble*), and was referred to as "gaming royalty"! That explains the fur trimmed cloak and matching crown and sceptre set he's been sporting recently, I suppose. If only he'd stop making us carry his sedan chair...

Well, I'm off for icecream. Coming?

Gribbly.

Listening to: Buddy Holly's All Time Greatest Hits (well _someone_ has to).

Watching: Da Matrix. Twice!

Playing: Duh. It starts with 'T'... ends with 'S'... that's right -- tennis. Er...

23rd April 1999

Well, another week of Hellgate, another build of S.A.G.E.!

Lotsa behind the scenes updates this week, which seems to either excite our Hellgate scripters Troggie and Phoenix in strange and unmentionable ways, or strike a discordant note of fear and anxiety in them. Its hard to tell from the expression on their faces most of the time. As for artists and designers, we just look at the list of updates and say, "Yeah, damn straight. I don't know what the hell that means, so it must be damn impressive!"

Starbuck and Troggie came to the rescue of we shallow fans of sweet, sweet, eye-candy, though! Starbuck created and animated the first of the ten Harnic Gods for the game - Agrik, the Immortal Warlord of Balgashang and all-round God O'War! Then Troggie scripted him up and put him onto a map. And mighty fine he(it?) looks too, stomping about and towering over miniscule peasants and buildings alike! Of course, exactly how, when, where and why he appears in the game I can't reveal...but he is big and nasty and red.

I've been working on the ambiguously (perhaps even mysteriously) named '*bleep* Sequence'. Who or what is a *bleep* Sequence? Why is one in Hellgate? Where did the whole idea come from (hint : starts with 'G' ends with 'ribbly')? All these questions may (or may not) be answered after that mysterious day in the future known only as 'Gold Master'. Suffice it to say that I'm having a jolly old time creating it!

A goodbye this week - Xfibble is returning to the cooler climes of Melbourne, to hibernate for the winter, I suspect. As Debbie Gibson so eloquently said, 'The future is...ELECTRIC YOUTH!'. I'll have to find my own Puffy and Denki Groove and Ms. Gibson in the future...Adios and good luck Xfibble!

Speaking of Debbie Gibson, one has to wonder where her peers Tiffany and our own Aussie Collette have gone career-wise. I'd have to guess that they are either robbing 7-11's, running their own cults or taking up a career in home made porn. Actually it's probably all of the above!

Now, gentle reader, we must return to the adventures of Flex Vader and Blahnanawalker!

You'll remember last time Blah committed cranial seppuku with a gun, since I, Flex Vader, only existed in his head, and would thus be destroyed by his own death. This was only partly true, since he was also a figment of my imagination, so his plan had some unexpected side-effects!

Everything went silent and dark, and then there was a blistering, blue tinged light. Blinking my crusty eyes open, I was at a desk, basking in the warm radiation of a 20-inch monitor, drooling over a graphics tablet. I heard the cry of Blah from nearby, the high pitched words - 'Pika-chu!'. Then I saw it, a plastic light-sabre with authentic sound effects(tm) lay at my desk, given to me by a wizened old hermit who had known my father. I picked up the sabre, turned on the sound effects, and extended the blade. Once more I heard one of Blah's calls - 'Spooooon!'. In a Tsui Hark/Jet Li, wire fighting-like manner I leapt and turned, to find Blah doing the same. He also had a green lightsabre, and as the blades clashed, their small audio chips detected the collision and made a pale imitation of Star Wars sound effects(tm). The battle had begun in earnest! (and Ernest wasn't too happy about that - hohohoho!)

Moral of the story - Well I think our very own Web Spice summed it up with her observations on a lightsaber duel between Marlboro and myself.

'Boys and their phallic toys...the excitement is limitless....'

Damn straight!

Listening - Eminem/Slim Shady (thanks to Gribbly) and Hitchhiker's radio shows
Playing - with my lightsabre (and multiplayer Baldur's Gate)
Reading - 'In the Ocean of Night' by Gregory Benford

'My brain's that way, I'm trying to get my head straight, but I can't figure out which Spice Girl I want to impregnate!' - Eminem/Slim Shady, 'My Name Is...'

30th April 1999

The end of a deathly cold week (*well, for Brisbane, anyway - it went down to about 18 degrees!*) sees me with an awesome sinus illness because of which my face feels like it weighs about 200 pounds...

but I won't gross everyone out with the details. Its obvious that winter is on the way, so its time to pull out the jumpers and other assorted warm weather gear, light the fire, crank up any heaters, and just sit and wait for Old Man Chill to get lost.

Everyone is waiting eagerly for the Brand New Movement System to be implemented in S.A.G.E. The movement system has been completely overhauled in the last few weeks and is just about ready to be chucked into the engine and then used for some more hardcore Hellgate-making. Once it is in, we'll be able to get started on more major components of the game itself, which should be pretty good fun!

Several of us are nearly catatonic with excitement as E3 approaches! The wonders, mystery, bright lights and hardcore street violence of Los Angeles are now only a week away for the luckier of us. Unfortunately we don't have a booth or anything this year at E3 - maybe next year, though. If anyone there wants to hook up with us while we're there... keep an eye out for us! (I'll probably be standing at the Quake 3 booth waiting for Thresh to show up so I can smack him down, Australian style). I'm looking forward to hooking up with a few people over there that I've only read about or talked to on IRC, so it should be pretty good fun (except the part about having to sleep on the floor in LA in a room with two other guys.. that bit sucks).

In addition to LA, I'm also cruising to San Francisco for a few days before hand to catch up with some relatives and just soak up some fog and some of the awesome scenery that SF provides.

Overall, a quiet one for development. I think having a long weekend at the start of the week and another one at the end of the week knock everyone into a subdued state of quiet euphoria and slows the mental processes :) Of course, having incredible banging, hammering, and sawing noises coming from the building happening only a few metres away from most of us is also detrimental for concentration - we're having some more bathrooms and some other bits and pieces put in.

Anyway, that's all from me this week, so, until next time, Dribble readers, may your lightsabres remain upright ! (Not that we're eagerly anticipating Star Wars or anything).

Listening to: Godsmack

Reading: The Mallorean, by David Eddings

Watching: Simpsons repeats

7th May 1999

It always amazes me that, despite the amazing number of wonderfully unique smells in the world, garbage trucks always smell exactly the same.

Another fabulously short working week this time around, we were saved again by a public holiday on Monday. There's nothing quite so funtastic as a short working week. It makes the week just... err... fly by. Couple this with Indian lunch day today, and you've got the recipe for sweet (beef - mmm, sweeeet beef) success.

In a revolutionary step yesterday, we completely reorganised the seating arrangement on the floor, upending all that had remained solidly bound in space and time (earth relative of course) for many moons. I think the most fun was had by all participating in the movement of the desks (and lives) of those not present for the great move. With the use of extremely large staples (and an extremely large staple gun to match), we managed to staple a couple of desks to the ceilings. It's an old gag, but what the hey, it was worth the effort.

Troggy decided to go through and rescript his own "trogworld" from the base up with S.A.G.E. (See Web Spice?... I remembered the dots!) I'm not sure, but I think he had much more fun with a small quadruped that flew around the screen than he ever should have.

Quite a few of our fellow Auranians are flying the coop this weekend to venture to the sunny, love-filled (love is what they call that dust that hangs in the air right?) climes of LA, to hit E3. I'm not jealous at all when I wish them a good time, and hope for their sakes that we don't "move" again while they're gone.

And now back to the epic battles of -- FLEX VADER, and BLAH NANA-WALKER.

Last time we left our heroes, they were struggling in a titanic battle on the office floor ...

Dodge

Parry

Lunge

Your mother wears army boots and she can't even tie them in a proper bow!

After the verbal insults were over, and the raging fires were well and truly stoked in both evil and good eyes alike, Mr Vader attacked by slashing his saber in a novice cutting stroke out to the left of Nanawalker, and combining it with a force throw of the nearest teddy bear (sorry Choco Spice). Blah avoided blow after blow as Flex attacked relentlessly, but it became obvious that neither of them would get the upper hand at this rate. Blah determined that he would have to use his mind (novel concept? Ed.). Focussing his astounding intellect, blahnana discovered that the fastest way to beat Flex Vader, was to go back in time, and watch history as it was more more times than Flex Vader could. Summoning his Wallet, blah proceeded to buy a ticket to the very first screening of Star Wars: The Phantom Menace shown in Australia, followed by another ticket for a screening the next day, and another screening the day after in the "Lounge Class" Cinema.

dribbler out.

Using: glue to keep my teeth in

Growing: something stinky between my toes

Borrowing: anything anyone will lend me.

14th May 1999

Flex 'Prospero' Mentallo's Lost Books, or The Sound and the Fury, Signifying Nothing!

Conichi-wa, gentle reader-san!

Flex Mentallo here, stepping up to the plate, hitting the home runs (BAMN!) and filling in for Gribbly and/or Troggie, Auran Adventurers at Large.

I don't mean Adventurers at Large as in walking the earth, flying on clouds, supping ales with weird gods, pondering imponderables on highest mountaintops, performing daring raids to rescue princesses (princessi?) from hidden fortresses, defending small towns from roving bandits, driving super-intelligent automobiles, gaining arcane knowledge by smoking exotic herbs through hookahs, saving single mothers in American midwest towns from the local landowner by building a tank out of a bale of hay, three twigs, an old tractor and the contents of a small lunchbox, OR standing betwixt life and death reciting Shakespeare whilst being hounded to suicide by the ghost of your dead father. No, I mean Adventurers at Large as in pounding the mean streets of LA, amidst the rundown streets and buildings, the giant donuts, gang-ridden hoodz, superstar-frequented restaurants, neon-lit shopping malls and tripping the light fantastic in the general all-purpose nexus of many things game related!

Yes, you guessed it, a selection of hapless, crazed, alcohol addled Auran employees (and the odd director or two) are in the City of Angels soaking up the, as David Bowie sang, Sound and Vision, of the awesome spectacle that is E3, the Electronic Entertainment Expo of Kings!. I'm not sure exactly what attending this grand event entails, but I suspect it involves drinking lots of beer, confusing Americans with Australian accents (Chew on this foreign readers - Struth Neville! Coo-ee and Stone the Crows! G'day Trev, Throw the Bloody Jumbuck on the Barbie! Bugger, Get the Esky, Bazza, ya Wanker!), ogling Lara Croft body doubles (although I think that an exact Lara Craft body double may be a physical impossibility, but hey, it is LA, so who knows!), oh, and checking out the latest and greatest gaming goodness!

Hopefully Gribbly remembered to pick up my Nerf gun order that I placed with him before he left. Our new seating arrangements (as reported by Blah last week) give me a fantastic target in Phoenix, who sits opposite to me and who has a propensity for tossing Nerf arrows at me! He needs to feel some of that Nerf gun heat! Hmmn, I wonder if Troggie is suffering under the knowledge that we have been playing Q3Test whilst he is on working hols? Anyway, I'm sure they'll return next week with plenty of tales of debauchery and cultural faux pas' galore! (Oh, and I suspect Cookie Monster may return with a suitcase full of Phantom Menace toys for his collection).

Meanwhile, back at the ranch...

Well S.A.G.E. continues on its merry way, as does the Hellgate art. Starbuck has proceeded along to the latest god, Naveh, the Thief of Heaven, god of chaos, disorder and nastiness. Marlboro continues on with the environment objects (rock formations at the moment), and I am still in the process of doing the intro sequence for the single player game (as mentioned in my last Dribble). We also got an early peek at the animatic of the rendered Auran intro sequence, and its shaping up very nicely indeed. And of course, we are not, I repeat NOT sitting around mucking about and playing silly buggers whilst two of the Directors and a goodly chunk of the staff are away. No-sirree! None of that going on here! SPOON!

A LOOOOOOONG TIME AGO (about fifteen minutes actually), IN A GALAXY FAR, FAR AWAY (actually, right here at my desk)...

EPISODE XX

Blahnwalker and Flex Vader, after a philosophical discussion of life, the force and everything, found that they were evenly matched in Jedi Battle, and decided to give up the whole lightsaber/force/Jedi thang, retire to a tropical island, and found the Order of the Blessed Calypso Jedi, supping cocktails and enjoying beach parties and feasts with the local island girls. This was the minimum period required for an extended period of rest and relaxation prior to the frenzy of Phantom Menace viewings, now only 20 (count 'em 20) days away!

And everyone lived happily ever after.

THE END

Last, but not least, I'd like to hang my head in sorrow, and report on what is probably the most tragic event of the millennium - the passing beyond the veil of Kimberley from Diffrent Strokes. Whether it was playing the responsible older sister, Playboy centrefold, 7-11 armed robber or amateur porn star, Kimberley tackled every role with aplomb. To think that with Willis in jail for dealing coke, Mr. Drummond's mysterious fate at the hands of strange aliens and Arnold's disappearance into obscurity, and now Kimberley's tragic overdose there can never be a 20th anniversary reunion movie of Diffrent Strokes to herald the 3rd Millenium Anno Domine. Oh, the humanity of it all. RIP Kimberley!

Listening to : Carter the Unstoppable Sex Machine - 30 Something

Watching : My fingers typing this guff (I can't really touch type, you see)

Reading : Sir Nigel, by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (seeking chivalric adventure and much noble advancement through honourable battle)

Pondering : The exact time lunch will arrive

Thinking about : The thing that guys are always thinking about!

Wondering : Whoops! Did I actually just type that, or did I just think it?

Deciding : To end this before I get myself in any more trouble 8)

Later, kids! YA-TA!

Just trying to be...

Flex Mentallo

21st May 1999

E3 this year was hosted at the Los Angeles Convention Center, a gigantic complex located in downtown Los Angeles. We approached the Convention Center, after spying it through the haze of smog, and passed by the main entrance on our way to the parking lot. Thousands of people were walking in, some getting out of cabs, some getting out of gigantic Hummer limousines. The entrance was festooned with large posters and billboards of gaming-related companies, and was only a small insight to what we were to find inside.

Somehow, we managed to find a park quite quickly and not too far away (bizarre, considering it was the first day). We left our hire car, looking quite plain next to the red Ferrari parked a few spots over, and made our way to the entrance. Upon our arrival, we headed over to the registration booth, again surprised about the lack of people in the queue. After receiving our passes, we made our way in.

Much to my chagrin, I realised we had started in the console section. I was surrounded by a horde of Playstation, Nintendo, and Dreamcast fans. The first thing I saw was a giant yellow Pikachu thing. Anyway, I managed to suppress my natural revulsion and pity for all these console gamers and had a quick look around. Seeing nothing interesting in the first few seconds, I started to make my way out and into PC land. b2 and I bailed, leaving Jan to venture around, lost in the throes of Zelda Syndrome. On the way out the door, we paused briefly to ogle a spectacular looking woman (one of the many that we were to discover). This lady was holding a microphone, and was standing in front of a large flatscreen monitor, on which was the image of Crash Bandicoot. On closer inspection, we discovered that you could actually talk to Crash (by means of the microphone and a camera on top of the monitor, and of course some Crash Bandicoot voice-guy hidden somewhere), which was quite cool.

Anyway, after making our escape, we ventured into the South Hall. This was where all the PC action was! This gigantic hall hosted the majority of PC publishers and game companies, including (but not limited to) Activision, Microsoft, Eidos and Infogrames. We ran into Shlime (our host in LA and one of the guys working on Dark Reign 2), and walked around with him for a while, glancing at a few things, whilst never deviating from our True Course, which was obviously the Quake 3: Arena stand.

It was during this walk that I formulated my first opinion of E3, which eventually turned out to be my final opinion: E3 is essentially nothing more than a large computer show inside a really big nightclub - lots of computers, lots of flashing, coloured lights, loud music and strange sound effects, some really hot chicks, and some really bizarre people.

Seeing the gigantic Activision signs in the distance, we headed over. Activision had a pretty large section of floor, demonstrating games like Dark Reign 2, BattleZone 2, Interstate 82, a stack of Star Trek games, and Vampire. All of these centred around what is likely to be their biggest product of the year: Quake 3: Arena.

Summary:

The Electronic Entertainment Expo is a pretty fun place to go. If you can get there, I definitely recommend going at least once, just to see if you like it. Now that I've been there once, I don't really know if I'd want to go there again - I'm a pretty lazy person, and I reckon that I could probably get the gist of future E3s just by reading the news and seeing what other people think - especially in these days where almost everyone that goes writes a review of E3.

That said, I'd definitely want to go again if I was there showing a game (or some other product) that I had been working on. It was great talking to the developers and watching their genuine enthusiasm as they discussed all the cool things that you could do in their game.

Americans seem to really like Australians, except the ones that mistook me for a Pom and a Kiwi - how humiliating. I met a stack of cool people, both gamers and game developers, and saw some really cool products. It was definitely a great adventure.

--Trog--

Gribbly's Daze Out!

Well I have to say that I approached E3 with a rather different bias to little Troggly, whose PC-centric rantings you can read above, seeing as I am a console gamer first and foremost, and last and leastmost as well.

Ironically enough, then, I started my E3 experience in the PC focussed "South" hall. Trog's nightclub analogy is quite accurate -- a large, expensive daytime-only nightclub for computer nerds, stocked with flashing lights, electronic diversions and untouchable, surgically enhanced women (the "other" silicon valley...). And no beer. Actually Trog's nightclub analogy sucks. What kind of wack-ass nightclubs do you go to anyway, Troggy?

In fact, I must say that the frankly sexist marketing tactics are one of my most enduring impressions of E3, and were probably the major difference between the console and PC halls (apart from the obvious). Check these statistics:

Average number of scantily clad, fake breasted, out-of-work actresses per PC booth: 19, per Console booth: -4 (since each short, out of work actor in a Sonic the Hedgehog suit counts as -1)

Seriously, though, I was extremely disappointed by the "bimbo factor", and found myself forming a rather negative opinion of those companies who relied heavily on a hormone-based approach to marketing. Very, very tacky, and entirely inappropriate. Come on people! This is meant to be a cutting edge industry! This crap would be embarrassing in a 1974 muscle car convention!

Moving on, there was some great stuff on display in both the PC hall, the console hall, and the "other" hall (where a lot of the smaller players in the industry gamely displayed their cut rate booths -- I say good for them!). I was very excited by Shogun: Total War from EA, our illustrious publishers. This marvellous game places you in feudal Japan in charge of huge armies. The 3D engine looked cool, and the number of units that can fight at once is awesome -- up to 5,000 or something. Q3A was tres cool as well - although if you've played Q3 Test you've seen pretty much everything that was in the E3 demo (although Trog tells me it was a later build). Drakan looked neat, Theme Park World looked very cute and fun, and "The Sims" gets my award for strangest PC game -- it appears to be a "suburbia" simulator! Still, nice graphics and if it's anywhere near as absorbing as SimCity it'll be a fine game. I wasn't able to see Black and White, unfortunately, since that was shown only behind closed doors. But by all accounts it's killer. Oh, and Giants looks really cool, too.

After the PC hall, I moved on to the Console hall, and I must say that for me this was like dying and going to heaven. Let me confess a long standing Sega bias before we continue... Left to right the console hall featured Sega (meaning "Dreamcast"), Sony and Nintendo. Console gamer heaven right here on Earth. I could have happily lived there, incessant bleeping and flashing notwithstanding.

Sega made a strong showing with about forty titles for Dreamcast. The hardware itself is pretty mindblowing, and while some of the games inevitably sucked, many were incredible. Arcade perfect Virtua Fighter 3? Yes please! The Sega stand was set out like an old school arcade -- they must have had 200 hundred machines at least -- and was pretty much packed for the whole three days. I know popular wisdom is that the DC will get thoroughly schooled by PlayStation 2 (more on that in a second), but in the meantime the DC is the sexiest console on the planet, and I cannot wait for the PAL release. Sega win my companion award for strangest console display -- "Seaman - Forbidden Pet". This was a large and surly fish creature in a virtual aquarium that you could talk to via the Dreamcast's microphone peripheral (microphone peripheral? Uh, yeah...) provided you had an American accent. Mystifyingly, Seaman spent most of his time claiming that certain Dreamcast features were overhyped. If only American companies could learn to be as endearingly odd.

After feasting my eyes on the rock solid frame rates and high-res gorgeousness of the Dreamcast, the PlayStation was looking pretty arthritic. Still, for a console that's pushing five years old I suppose it's holding up pretty well. I was excited by Um Jammer Lammy, which is stupid and cool as only Japanese console games can be. There really wasn't much else that hoisted my flag for the PS-X, though. More interesting was the PSX-2 display -- some very sexy demos were displayed, and I was thrilled to be allowed to control the little submarine-rubber-duck-in-ridiculously-cool-looking-water demo. The PSX-2 will no doubt be a major console force.

Then it was over to the Nintendo stand, where proceedings were pretty much evenly divided between Pokemon, Rare and Star Wars Episode One Racer. The three Rare titles (Perfect Dark particularly) looked super cool, the Pokemon stuff engagingly weird and Star Wars like a movie tie-in of the more decent type (Fifth Element it ain't). Nintendo look set to have a good year, as the N-64 doesn't look anywhere near as tired as the Sony GrainStation.

Overall I'd have to say that I agree with Trog up to a point -- there's not that much at E3 that you can't find out by assiduously studying the various news sources. But then, reading about games is a bit like talking about sex. Not quite the same thing :) So if my kindly Auran benefactors (hi Maneus!) wish to send me over next year, I'm certainly up for it! There's nothing quite like seeing it all laid out side by side, in the flesh (as it were).

Gribbly Out.

Listening to: The Shiggar Fraggar Show Vol. 4. "Very Good".

Playing: Trying to finish MGS with bad jetlag.

Watching: Plane movies -- surely a genre unto themselves. Oh, and MTV, because they interviewed me as I was belting the crap out of some poor little web designer from Chicago at the VF3 stand! Can you spell "shrieking fanboy" boys and girls?

28th May 1999

It's been an interesting week here at the Auran offices.

The internet censorship bill was passed on Wednesday by the senate, a rather broad bill that calls for censorship of all online forms of adult material. Laughing at Australia? I am... but I shouldn't be.

We had the crew from override.com.au here to check out the goings on of a games company, and they chatted to our CEO and Gribbly about the process of manufacture. Watch for it on the box in Australia soon!

The Australian multimedia industry group, AIMIA, held it's meeting here during the week. They had a tour of the facilities and checked out the progress of the new sound studio and thought it was pretty cool.

We checked out the first installment of Gribbly's E3 video collection, and it was excellent to get a better view of the expo we'd heard so much about since the travellers got back. Flex and I both agreed that the Pikachu next generation VW beetle was excellent :) The man sized Pikachu looked a bit overweight though... Lots of really cool stuff coming out.

dribbler out.

4th June 1999

Every Saga has a Beginning...

What a dreadful calamity it is that our very own Flex Vader is currently out of action due to an imbalance in the force (aka a nasty 'flu). That meant he missed the private Auran screening of "Episode 1: The Phantom Dentist" (no, wait...). Last night, nearly all the Auranites assembled with friends, loved ones, business associates and desperate-hangers-on-who-were-only-in-it-for-the-free-tickets at the Hoyts Myer Centre here in cosmopolitan Brisbane. A fine time was had by all. Lucas' latest cash machine was preceded by an uncharacteristically brief speech from The Gourmet, Auran's CFO and shameless speechifier. Fake plastic lightsaber glowing in the dark cinema, he welcomed us all and invited us to enjoy a great movie.

Was it a great movie? Well that's a flame war I'm not starting. Sorry! Suffice to say it was a Star Wars movie, no doubt about it. I certainly enjoyed it, although a certain floppy eared alien would have had his-um vocal cords torn out if I'd been on board a space ship with him for any length of time. He's-um pretty durn annoying =P

Actually, one thought I've had is that I want to be the little dude who plays Anikin Skywalker. Can you imagine how cool that kid must be at school? I mean, he is Darth Vader! You don't get cooler than that I don't think. He's been flying around blowing sh... I mean stuff up with R2D2! He met Yoda! *pout* I'll never be that cool :(Actually I thought he was pretty good in the movie. It could have been far, far worse...

The last two weeks have been a time of leaps of bounds on (tgfka)Hellgate-which now really not called Hellgate anymore! NO! Important announcement: the official "name of the game" is now:

Harn:Bloodline

Cool, huh? GMan doesn't like it, but what would he know, right kids? :) Anyway, that's the name. And yes, that means that this site will get a makeover will Bloodliney type graphics instead of Hellgate, and this won't be HellDribble any more. I suppose it will be, er, BloodDribble. Which actually sounds less appealing, really, doesn't it? Harn:Bloodline, OK?

Now, what else? Oh yeah, we've got a couple of important demos coming up, so we've been tweaking and tuning the game to make sure it's as well behaved as possible. Several major new features have gone in, the most obvious of which is the extremely pretty environment system. The game is starting to resemble a living world, which is tremendously exciting. Also, a lot of persistent bugs that everyone has been too busy to fix have been tracked down and mercilessly executed like... no, I won't pursue that metaphor. Anyway they're gone, and the game is considerably more stable. Some optimizations from Cookie and his magical band of 3D codewarriors have given us further framerate increases as well, which are always welcome. I have derived much pleasure from pestering lead programmer Hitman all week for new versions with cool features. He is now thoroughly sick of me, and I am generally greeted with a hearty "sod off!" whenever I approach his desk. Ha!

So it's been a busy week. Between Star Wars and our never-ending stream of demo builds I've barely had time to slack off and browse the web... no wait! I mean email my girlfriend. Doh!

Ah forget it...

Gribbly has left the building.

Listening to: Some rather neat mods from here...

Playing: Q3Test, Baybee! "Gribbly was in the wrong place" *sigh*

Watching: "I sense much fear in you..."

10th June 1999

Ahh back at the keyboard, writing a Dribble.

Thoughts drift to Mr Burns...

Let me see that. It was the best of times, it was the blurst of times. Why you stupid monkey!

SLAP

Oops, sorry, my brain is still in a slight daze...

Dribble's a day early this week, since Web Spice is off galavanting around the country for the long weekend getting into all sorts of capers and hijinks!

After my sojourn into the land of sickness and insomnia last week, I returned on Monday to find, well, new stuff in Hårn: Bloodline. Things are really cranking for the upcoming internal demos, which is 'A Good Thing(tm)'...

The combat system is finally starting to come together, whilst the mechanics of a combat system are not so hard to implement (we have all of the Hårn rules as a basis), getting the visuals right in 3D can be a difficult task. Whilst 2D games like Warcraft have simple top down melee animations of a few frames, we have some really nice combinations of attack and defense, along with SFX, it really is starting to look nice together - watching two guys fight on a slope looks particularly cool... Well it looks cool most of the time, occasionally someone will decide to fight by turning side on to their enemy and swinging their sword - but thats, ummm, not a bug, no, no, that's a feint, to trick the enemy - using advanced AI. Yeah that's it...

Also there was the amazing Mr. Recovery, who after being knocked unconscious would attempt to get up, realise he was actually still unconscious, then fall over again. He just kept on trying to get up!

There are lots and lots of little things going in, too many to mention, but taken as a whole there has been fantastic progress.

Anyway, I need to get back to polishing up the Hårn: Bloodline interface for these demos!

Just trying to be,

Flex Mentallo

Listening to : A fine selection of mp3's slowly engulfing my harddrive

Reading : Corum, by Michael Moorcock

Watching : Alien Legacy DVD's - mmm sweet Aliens...

Soon to be watching : Austin Powers 2 - The Spy Who Shagged Me

I call him...Mini-Me!

18th June 1999

Previously on dribble-TV:

[Swede] There's a new dribbler on this page!

[Troggie] Hah, This URL isn't big enough for both of us.

Troggie cowardly pulls out a railgun and rails the newcomer.. *pweeeng* *pwoong*!

Fortunately the mighty Swede deflects the projectiles with his well trained abs.

[Swede] You shoot like a girl! Take this you slimy Trog-lodyte!

He screamed, stabbing Trog in the stomach with a neatly assembled bookshelf from IKEA. (discrete product placement, huh?)

Well.. maybe it didn't happen quite like that.. and maybe my abs aren't so well trained.. maybe Cookie was actually trying to tell me something when he gave me a free membership card to his new club: "The fat bastards - learn to love your handles"..maybe.. What did you say? Toes? What do they look like?

Troggie unfortunately left us two weeks ago, and he's going to be missed by us all. I got the honor of trying to fill his shoes as a new dribbler.. but it's going to be hard.. very hard! Partly because Troggie was a very skilled dribbler, and partly because I've never worn high heels before! (Maybe just a teeny weenie bit below the skirt.. eh..belt, but if you show up at work in your sisters clothes, you'd better be prepared for it)

Oh.. and I'm supposed to talk a little about what's been going on this week at Auran.. It started out gloriously with a day off, God save the Queen! While we were happily celebrating this noble being, my fellow Swedes back home were preparing to celebrate "Midsommar Afton"! For those of you that don't know of this Nordic tradition I can tell you a little bit about it: It's a heretic ritual that the Vikings started a long time ago. (something like 700 ac) It's a fertility ritual, and what you'd basically do was, dance around a large erect phallus symbol, drink a lot of mead, have sex and drink some more mead... Nowadays, with our modern society its a lot more sophisticated.. we've turned the symbol upside down (now resembling a cross, but the nuts are still there), drink a lot of distilled beverages, those who get lucky have sex, those who don't drink some more..

Uh.. I seem to have problems sticking to the subject.. (a trait amongst dribblers) .. anyway, this week has been an extremely cold week, a 10 on a queenslandic scale. Proof enough is the fact that the office experienced a power outage, as a result of too many heaters defrosting little queenslander's feet.

Getting closer to the demos, the nocturnal beings also known as programmers have again thrown away what little they had left of life outside Auran to stay back and do wondrous things that no one will ever *cough* I mean you will all love and enjoy.

Oh and.. Lets all join hands, sing Kumbaya, and pray for a swift return of Flex and Droid H who are both home depleting their store of days-you-can-be-home-playing-games-on-and-still-get-paid.

And last but not least.. I would like to say "Grattis i efterskott kungen!" (birthday gratz to the proud Swedish king)

The mighty Swede

Listening to : My stomach rumble

Reading : Some obscure paper by Prof. Robert Fuller

Watching : My screen go blue

25th June 1999

Muchki buschki kyckling!

Fate will not be defeated!

There is NO way that it can be colder in Australia than in Sweden. Except when I happen to be here, of course. There's a reason I left the polar bears you know. But oh no, Pete lives here, let's make it frigging cold, shall we?

Crunch time (also known as 'oh no, not again').

It's that time again. The evil people have a huge list of stuff to torture the good programmers with (ok, a feature / bug list, if you must know). They chain us to our computers and make us work long hours*. And then they give us pizza, and we forgive them.

It's always the same story. Why can't designers and stuff just sit and watch the screen, isn't it interesting enough to just watch the bunny jump around? There's no need to use the mouse, is there? Of course the selection shield's supposed to be 10 meters wide! It's just... eh... more user friendly that way.

Ant attack!

Ok, it was amusing the first half an hour. But when you've tried 37 different ways of ant elimination, it's just massively annoying. They're all over my desk, speakers, monitor and harddrive. I'm investigating a new form of electro shocks to get rid of them.

I came up with a few new interesting words, trying to catch the ones in my keyboard, though.

Conspiracy

We have an announcement to make: Another Swede is coming down to help The Mighty Swede with AI. It's the One and Only 'Ols'. We Swedes will soon take over this place! Muahahaha. No more vegemite, only meatballs, Volvos and ABBA... er... maybe not ABBA.

Oops, almost forgot. I'm supposed to tell you what's happening on the Hårn: Bloodline front. Well, we have Funky Munkys new psychedelic particle effect. We can now have lots of funny things flying around in strange and cool ways. And we have some new glorious fighting animations, it's always more interesting to hack up your opponent into small pieces if it looks good.

*) Fixing art related problems of course. Honest.

"no worries, eh?"

Australian for "S***, this isn't working!"

And that's enough,
Pete

2nd July 1999

Yes, friends, it's gribbly back at the Dribble-helm for the first time since my Swedish Dribble-colleagues upped the Dribble-ante in their Dribble-debut. Good work boys!

Of course Swedish Dribbler#2, Pete, is not content with mere Dribble-fame. No! He and one of our other Swedish 3D ninjas Bjorn (aka "Alex", aka "the sole remaining Patrick Swayze fan in the known universe") are over on glsetup.com (which even we Voodoo equipped Auran-ites Heartily Endorse) strutting their stuff. You go, girls.

Anyway, on with the Dribble.

It's a week of both good and bad news. The good news is that after many weeks (and in some cases, months...) of uber-crunching into the wee small hours, we have completed the first of our internal demos with -- dare I say it -- flying colours. S.A.G.E. and Hårn: Bloodline were marvellously well behaved as a nervous and sleep deprived yours truly manned the mouse and demonstrated what we could do for Auran's top brass. Nary a crash to be seen, and only a couple of heart in mouth moments as the camera decided to resolutely stare into the sky despite my desperate commands to the contrary. Still, the spontaneous applause at the end was music to our ears (albeit out of time and not very melodic music). Funky's particle effects (beautifully massaged by SprayNWipe) were probably the hit of the day, but really everyone chipped in to produce a stable, fast and damn attractive demo. Now, of course, we have the second, more difficult internal demo -- and only four weeks to do it in. So that's quite enough back patting!

The bad news is that it's the end of an era. Two of Auran's longer term employees -- both of whom distinguished themselves on Dark Reign, and have made fine contributions to Hårn: Bloodline -- have decided to brave the big wide world, and are leaving us. MeanMuthaF... hmm... perhaps "Marlboro Man" is more appropriate in this context :) Marlboro Man (Xtreme 3D art and texture specialist), Killbot (Xtreme sound chap par excellence (and furniture assembly droid without equal =P)), we will miss you, and we wish you all the best for the future.

Gribbly tired now. Gribbly stop typing now.

Listening to: ERTHER/DETHON's awesome "Fragbait" MP3 -- thanks Blah!

Playing: Q3ATEST1. There's other games?

Watching: Jelena Dokic _own_ Wimbledon.

Eagerly awaiting: Shenmue... new Shenmue movie today *drool* -- thanks Flex!

9th July 1999

Last time on Dribble - Gribbly was left in a feverish state over his DDS (Dreamcast Deficiency Syndrome), Blahboy kept mercilessly tapping Flex (that's me!) on the shoulder and causing embarrassing twists of the head and looking foolishly out into space, but luckily whilst doing that Pete was fragging Blah's ass on Q3A. In the distance, the Mighty Swede stood ominously, looking, well, umm, MIGHTY! Now for today's episode, which we could only call...

DREAMCAST MADNESS!!!

Well its another rainy winter's day in the Sunshine State, but this does not deter our relentless adventurers from getting into adventures, writing games and playing Dreamcast!

Playing Japanese Dreamcast...yep we finally got one, with not one, not two, but three fighting games. Woot! Power stone being by far the most impressive and fun, and Giant Gram : Japanese All Pro Wrestling 2 being the most hilarious, with King of Fighters being lambasted by the heathens as 'only 2D'...Bah, humbug! YAY Dreamcast! The only thing missing is the cute little 'SAAAAYY-GA!' that the Megadrive had on startup, but you can't have everything I guess. Damn I can't believe they are going to change the orange swirl to a blue one, that sucks.

There were many cans of whup ass being handed about on Power Stone, although Funky Munky was getting scary with his 'Great Sage, Equal of Heaven' routine at lunch today, beating all comers. Still there was a slab of whup ass to go 'round, so we all ended up with red raw botties after all the Dreamcasting going on this week!

Anyway, back to relevant stuff...

What other important events have happened that affect Auran and Bloodline this week...hmmnnn

MONKEY IS BACK ON TV!!!!!! Whilst perhaps incomprehensible to our foreign viewers, many Australian readers will fondly remember Monkey from afternoon viewings on the ABC in the early 80's. Yep, now we have 3hrs of Monkey every Saturday morning, oh, what pure and wondrous bliss. Dreamcast and Monkey in one week, I fear I may explode in delight! Hmmn but I'll try and restrain my search and continue my quest to India with Monkey, Pigsy, Sandy, Horse and Tripitaka. Oh right, I mean continue my quest to complete the Dribble - Monkey was...IRREPRESSABLE!!!!

Ok, Ok, really back to the relevant stuff this time...(that's about Bloodline... yeah, that game we're making!)

As the post-director's demo afterglow subsides and fades into memory, we are charging ahead to our next demo, and the next sweet, sweet afterglow of the EA demo. *Ahem*

So what's going on, I hear you ask, please give us some actual news and not just the usual ranting and drivel...Well we are getting builds galore of S.A.G.E. these days, you can barely swing a cat in here without hitting a new build of S.A.G.E.! Naturally, it is the job of those of us working on Bloodline to find as many bugs in S.A.G.E. as we can and then annoy the programmers by putting them in our bug tracking software so that they actually have to fix them! I suspect that they deliberately put bugs in just to make sure we are paying attention, or actually working, or something like that. Which of course we are, because I can't imagine we'd be doing anything else, such as whiling away the hours playing Dreamcast. Nope, none of that going on here...

The Bloodline scripting team has expanded again with Strontium entering the fray, to bolster up the team of crazed, lone-gunman Kaz and the Mario Party maniac Spraynwipe. Kaz has been, well, scripting all sorts of stuff, pretty much a bit of everything, whilst spraynwipe is busy doing groovy particle effects for Shek Pvar (huh, what are those) spells. On the art side, Gutter has done up a nice hi-res building to test out the multi-res mesh stuff (coded by Dribble's own Pete, I believe) and scooter riding ArtSwede is animating, animating, animating. I've been sprucing up the interface, attacking some drab looking fonts with my Wacom tablet, and that well known 'Power Stone Gimp' Gribbly has been, umm, well he has been

salivating over the Dreamcast a lot, but he's also keeping the Bloodline ship on track, designing a bit of this, directing a bit of that.

'Of course you have to collect the power stones, its called Power Stone!'

Lastly, and sadly. Bjorn, known to local Quakers as Alex (or to those of us less skilled at Quake as 'f***ing Alex'), is heading back home to Sweden. Whilst we will certainly miss him, I feel that the Australian Patrick Swayze fan club will miss him more, since I'm fairly certain he was the only member, but we wish Bjorn all the best in the future. Oh and just to prove how culturally hip I am to our Swedish brethren, I'll wish Bjorn a 'Happy Smorgasbord!' and please look out for those Polar Bears and Yetis that I hear are always plaguing Sweden. Best of luck, Bjorn!

Oh wait, did I say culturally hip back there, I meant to say painfully uninformed idiot.

Listening to : the sound of one hand clapping - its very soothing!

Watching : this weekend? One or all of the following -

- a) the Kubrick DVD's that arrived on my desk this morning,
- b) Mick Molloy's new TV show (its got televised stunts on it, and maybe underpants gags!),
- c) Star Wars for the 4th time. OK! OK! I'm a Star Wars geek...but I ain't alone!
- d) Monkey on Saturday morning - what an act of genius by the ABC - 'With our thoughts, we create the world!'

Reading : this Dribble to make sure I haven't made any major mistakes (other than writing it in the first place) and Cities in Flight by James Blish

Whew! That was a long Dribble! One could say it was a...mouthful of Dribble! MOOHAHAHAA AHHAHA ahahaha hah ha he h

Mmmm...

Just trying to be,

Flex Mentallo

Boop-boop be doop!

16th July 1999

Falling. It's like a bad dream, that's real, and about falling, and ends with a big thump at the end. Yup. Falling is just like a bad dream.

Or perhaps it's more like one of my witty anecdotes. It whistles past as I tell it, and it ends by landing on it's face.

It's been one of those weeks that I wished that my eardrums were made out of double glazed glass (you know, to go along with my sawdust-filled head). Having finished the building renovations that were going on right next to my office, I thought I might have escaped from the ordeal with my sanity intact (don't even think it Gribbmeister), but this week they installed a new (NEW AND IMPROVED! Just like my underpants!(TM)) alarm system, and as we all know, the only way to test a new alarm system is to cut the wrong wire (the green wire you schmuck! it's always the butler!), and then run around like the proverbial chicken with it's head cut off trying to find the wire that stops the technician from sharing the chicken's fate. Of course, after they finished testing our new security alarm, the level below us decided that they wanted in on the action, and set off the fire alarm for the building with a barbecue that we weren't even invited to.

SprayNWipe proved himself to be amongst the fashionably elite by purchasing an Id hockey jersey with his name emblazened across the back of it.

Now none of us have an excuse for shooting him in the back and not knowing who he was...

Err....

And on that note...

-- dribbler

I cut down trees,
I wear high heels,
Suspenders and a bra!
I wish I'd been a girly,
Just like my dear Papa!

-- The Lumberjack song from Monty Python

23rd July 1999

"Conspiracy Theory"

Yeah..sure! Like that bullet could change direction like that! And what do you mean area 51 doesn't exist?

Something weird is going on here...it starts off with the fact that management actively supports the "Fat bastards"-club by giving us free delicious lunch, another free meal when we work late.. free fruit, Coke and other beverages, cake once a month, and now they've introduced a 'Snack-friday' on wich they feed us alcoholic beverages and snacks. They obviously want us to be so fat that we couldn't bother getting off the chair and go home once the workday is over!

Not to mention the new alarm system that they've installed... it took me 35 minutes and 4 calls to the security company just to get out of the place! They try everything!!

Last night they even tried drugging us with some weird gas.. They tried covering it up with some bogus explanation like "The airconditioner caught fire!" ..Yeah sure!!

And then.. someone must have thought I got too close to the truth and slipped something into my coffee, because I lost my voice.... A cold??? ...I Don't think so! I know what's happening, and I won't be silenced that easily..I can still dribble! I think even Cookie is involved in some way..he's obviously been trying to use reverse psychology on me.. "You don't sound too good.. you should go home!", "You look like s***! Why aren't you at home?".. hah! I'll keep on working anyway! That'll show them..eh..um.. or? Damn! That always works on me..

(flashback to the 80's)

My brother: "Erik.. make SURE you don't TOUCH that high voltage capacitor!"

Erik: "Ok!"

.. 1.. 2.. 3.. ZZZZAAAAPPPPPP!

(Erik's right hand goes numb from the shock)

Erik: Uuuuuuuuuahhhhhh!

My brother: Blahahahahahaha!

On the subject of security; If you ever pay a visit to Auran, you might see the guys rubbing their arse against the wall before going through a door.. "Ahaa.. they've got their security card in their backpocket!" - you might think.. but no! We've actually installed the latest in security: ComTech OdourLock v1.2 It uses a finely tuned neural network to classify the sweaty smell of the employees buttocks. So.. thugs.. I'd like to see you pick that lock! (though if you could get your hands on Hitman HQ's underpants you could probably get past the door, but you'd die shortly after from severe gas poisoning). Besides you'd probably trigger one of the 2 billion motionsensors that we had installed (that one of them that actually works) ..and would have to deal with the 'guard with the dark voice'. No one has ever seen him but I bet he's huge and nasty! He probably eats petty criminals for breakfast.

So what's been happening on the Bloodline front you might wonder.. well..hm.. let's see.. I'm told I'm only allowed to tell you stuff that has already been told... and something tells me you're really just interested in the new stuff...the stuff that noone has told you before.. so basically I'll tell you nothing, unless I'm later told I'm allowed to tell you something untold.. of course!

Ok, that was a really sad attempt, I admit it...

Even more sad is the fact that Funky Munky left us this week.. He's heading back to uni like so many others.. Munky and his blessings will be truly missed here at Auran.. We wish you all the b(l)est!

That's about all I have to say for now! See ya all in five weeks or so!

The mighty Swede

Listening to : Prodigy (yes this is one of those Prodigy only weeks)

Reading : Machine Learning (recommended by Ola)

Watching : My tummy get larger, although I'm trying hard to ignore that fact

30th July 1999

Heek!

The great philosopher Seirrow On once said - making a game is like tuning a guitar. You start with the first string and by the time the second is tuned, the first one's slightly off. Or to speak in S.A.G.E. terms, by the time you've added the second cart to the horse, the first one does the breakdance. It makes it easy to come up with new "features" though.

There's a tree next to my desk. That might not be the most revolutionising thing you've ever heard, but add strange chemicals to keep insects away and the fact that I have a hard time avoiding inhaling them, to the mix. It makes programming a whole lot more interesting. The only problem comes the following day, when you try to figure out exactly what you meant by that "nirvana inspired texture cache". And most importantly - how the *BEEP* it works.

A lucky few of us Auranites got a sneak preview of the flashy new sound studio this week. That was a sight to behold. Just imagine the amount of fun you can have with thousands of flashing buttons in different colours! Add guitars and and Kiss make-up and you got the definition of fun!

We also managed to exercise the alarm system to the new studio quite a bit this week. Now we definitely know that it works. But just to make sure, we've set up a rotating scheme so that everyone gets to try it at least once per day. We're getting quite good at it.

Now on to the serious stuff. We've dribbled for a long time now and successfully held you in the dark about what Hårn:Bloodline really is. Finally the time has come to reveal a bit of the beast to the public. Ladies and gentlemen, the moment of truth is closing in. For the first time ever, we're going to present to you a screenshot from the world of Hårn:Bloodline. Let the curtains fall!



I will now leave you in the hands of our Hårnic guide, Gribbly, to dispel some of the clouds of mysteries that have surrounded our game.

Thanks Pete. I couldn't ask for a dribbler introduction than that! Well yes it's a big day in Dribble -- the first "official" screenshot of Hårn:Bloodline. I assume everyone's had a good look, so let Old Uncle Gribbly explain what's going on here.

I'll start by pointing out that this screenshot is 100% genuine, straight out of the game. The only modification we've done is to paste on the Hårn:Bloodline logo in the bottom left (and we'll probably make the game do that automatically at some stage anyway). The rest is pure Bloodline, running at 1024x768 on a RivaTNT.

First thing you'll notice is the wall. That's a big wall, huh? All the better to defend a village with, my pretties. At the far left you'll notice an even bigger stone tower connected to the wall. More defences! When you absolutely, positively have to defend every last square inch of your turf, accept no substitutes. As you can guess, defence is a big deal in the game.

Leaning on the wall (next to the big stone tower), is a mobile siege tower. All the better to attack a village with. The chap with the torch got to his present position on the wall by climbing up the siege tower. He's going for a bit of a stroll along the wall, perhaps having a look out over the crenellations.

Word of the day: Crenellation (n)- any of the embrasures alternating with merlons in a battlement (thanks to m-w.com!)

The torch he's carrying is lighting up his immediate environment in a rather spiffing way -- a feature of Sage that is being thoroughly exploited in Hårn:Bloodline for all sorts of delicious eye-candy. Can you say "spell effects" boys and girls? Another feature you can discern in this screenshot is the recently implemented weather system -- just don't ask how that torch is staying alight in the rain (it's a magical torch, alright?).

So perhaps this shot will give everyone a hint of what's going on in the world of S.A.G.E. and Hårn:Bloodline. I hope you agree that the game is starting to look very sexy indeed, thanks to the 24-7 efforts of the S.A.G.E and Hårn:Bloodline teams. Good work, everyone!

Of course, the real question is: what is that peasant in the distance doing to (or on) that tree?

:) Gribbly out -- back to you Pete...

Thank you Gribbly. Now back to the real world. See you all next time.

And that's enough,
Pete

Watching: A bunch of cool Arnold Schwarzenegger movies. Bad English personified, a true hero.
Listening to: Images & Words by Dream Theater.
Reading: The Three Musketeers by Alexandre Dumas.
Playing: That damn Q3Test - I'm addicted.
Avoiding: Drop bears - you never know what's in them toxic trees.

6th August 1999

Greetings Dribble-fans,

First I'd like to respond to all the kind souls who emailed us to point out that the peasant on the wall in last week's exclusive Dribble Screenshot couldn't possibly fit through the door on the tower:

Shut up! :)

OK, I feel better now. Actually, you're quite right all of you, and the artist responsible has been forced to listen to Blahnana sing. We'll make the door larger, OK?

No screenshots for ya this week, but rest assured more will be coming your way soon. This week I've been asked to talk a little bit more about Hårn, the paper RPG that forms the background for Hårn:Bloodline. But, where to start?

Well first Hârn is *_big_*. I mean, *_really_* BIG. Columbia games, who publish the paper version, estimate that 2,000,000 words or thereabouts have been published to date, and there's new material coming out fairly regularly. Now as you can imagine, that big-ness translates into a lot of detail. Let me give you an example:

In the published Hârn material, I can refer to details on Kêléstia, the "cosmic all, the sum of all worlds and all realities" (see what I mean about big?). Kêléstia is divided up into a number of "world families" (worlds that are close together in n-dimensional spacetime), each of which has a "nexus" world. In the published material, the most detailed family is the Kéthrian family of worlds. This family happens to contain Terra (aka "Earth" =P), but let's focus on the nexus world, Kéthira. It's described as "the second of five planets of the star Nólomar. The planet is slightly smaller than Terra and has one moon called Yaél. Oceans and seas cover about seventy eight percent of Kéthira's surface, including two large polar icecaps. There are three continents: Lýthia, Mernát and Kámerand". HârnWorld goes into an enormous amount of detail on this world, offering maps of the Kéthrian Geography, Vegetation, Ocean Currents, Plate Tectonics, Astronomy and Prevailing Winds.

The most developed (in terms of published material) continent is Lýthia, off the coast of which is a small island (not unlike England relative to mainland Europe) called Hârn. The published material covers 720 years of history in meticulous detail, and history preceding this is available (but is more patchy -- not surprising when you look at our own, Terran, history!).

The island of Hârn is further subdivided into regions -- feudal kingdoms, mostly, but also a republic (Thârda) and pre-feudal Orbáal (loosely modelled on Viking society). An enormously intricate tapestry of history weaves these regions together and leads, very convincingly, to the current state of affairs (in published Harn material, "current" means 720TR). The world is cleverly designed to be full of "tinderbox" situations -- each region has its own gaming possibilities, and no matter where you go rebellion, invasion, civil war, or complex political situations are not far away. The island of Hârn supports populations of subtly rendered dwarves (the Khuzdul), elves (the Sindarin), and the fearsome Gargun, orc-like creatures. Far stranger creatures await the bold explorer, the work of Ilvir, one of Hârn's ten gods (and the only one to actually dwell on the island).

Delving further into the available material, we can look through one of the "regional modules". There we'll find maps of the subdivisions (shires, usually) of each region. These maps show the major settlements (castles, keeps and manorhouses), and give details about who holds them, their feudal obligations, political sympathies, their economic situation... the list goes on and on! Beyond even *_that_*, there are maps of each individual castle and keep, showing the local environment, the townships that surround them, and providing detail right down to the names (and competence) of the various shopkeepers.

Still want more? OK, because there are floorplans available available for the major castles and keeps, showing the exact layout of each floor of the castle right down to the arrangement of table and chairs in the dining room.

Phew

Yep, there's nothing out there to compete in terms of detail. And not only that, it's all internally consistent, being predominantly the work of N. Robin Crossby -- creator and the mastermind behind Hârn.

Anyway, that's quite enough I think -- and my fingers are falling off.

Gribbly out!

Listening to: Trick Daddy's Uncle F*cka remix. It rules!

Watching: Eyes Wide Shut (tonight, I hope...)

Reading: "My Year of Meat", by Ruth L. Ozeki. Recommended!

13th August 1999

Heya Dribbles

It's Flex here, with some of the most important news you'll ever hear...it's so important in fact that I'm going to ... er... hey, what are you doing in here?? and what are you doing with that stuffed armadillo??

thud... shuffle drag ...sploight)

Er, did I type Flex??? I meant sprayNwipe, that's right! Flex...um..had to go away for a week to...um...Siggraph, really! Why am I holding a stuffed armadillo covered in blood, you ask? Well, I....I need it for um...hey, look over there!

(throw thoiK)...what armadillo?? You must be some kind of crazy person!

Aaanyway, for those of you who don't know me, I'm an Assistant Designer here at Auran. This basically entails being locked in a (relatively comfy) steel cage suspended over a pit of hungry Chihuahuas, with only the latest S.A.G.E. build, the Hârn:Bloodline design document and a limitless supply of Coke - all while Gribbly rambles on about various Dreamcast stuff in a Colonel Klink voice...

Okay, maybe I exaggerated - Sometimes, there isn't any Coke :p

(bah dah ching)

But seriously, today I'm here to talk to you about some Hârn stuff. For those of you who just tuned in, Hârn is the paper RPG that forms the background for Hârn:Bloodline. At this moment in time, there are over 2,000,000 words in print about the Hârn universe, of which a large majority is composed by its creator, N. Robin Crossby.

Something unique to the world of Hârn are Convocations. Very simply, convocations are groups of magic, which are arranged as follows:



Each convocation has a certain focus: Lyahvi's focus is Etherealness, Peleahn is Heat, Jmorvi is Minerals, Fyvria is Life, Odivshe is Darkness, and Savorya is Knowledge

A mage can choose to specialize in one - and only one - convocation. However, after their training is complete, they also obtain some abilities in neighboring convocations. For example, a Lyahvi mage has some facility with Savoryan and Peleahan spells.

There are also many other things that can affect a mage-to-be, such as the Shek Pvar and the White Hand, but that is for another Dribble far far away...

Of course, all of these convocations have been put into Hârn:Bloodline, meaning that there is a huge base of spells that can be cast in the game, with names like Iron Sting, Gaze of Crystal Power and the ever-mysterious Zynas Well. There are also some spells in for...er..."Testing Purposes", such as the mysterious Cat-Walking-Across-A-Kitchen-Floor spell, and the Harn-Accurate South-Park-Episode-1-on-a-box spell, but I'm guessing these spells will be cut before the game is released ;p

While on the topic of bizarre magic, Soul Caliber arrived at the Auran offices this week!! Along with some "other" game called Virtua Fighter 3tb, this makes 5 fighting games for the Auran Dreamcast, out of the...um...5 Dreamcast games we have. Kaz immediately started applying smack-down to everybody playing Soul Caliber, which is a pleasant change from Kaz applying smack-down to everybody playing Powerstone :)

Oh well, I guess there's always Q3Test ;)

sprayNwipe
==

Playing: System Shock 2 Demo...oh, and also Soul Caliber ;p

Waiting for: The new Regurgitator Album...only 11 sleeps to go!
Wondering: Why the McOz was permanently put on the McDonalds menu when the Double Quarter Pounder is/was clearly a superior burger.
Watching: The second Jimoein series on thecomedychannel
Visiting: The Mushroom (www.themushroom.com) - Think The Onion (www.theonion.com), but for Videogame news :)

20th August 1999

Dribble Me This, Dribble Me That!

What wonder does this week's Dribble bring forth?

Probably not a lot since I forgot to write it until late Friday afternoon! Anyway, I'll get straight into Hârn Reality Class 3 - or how I kept the faith by worshipping the ten Gods of Hârn!

Whilst Hârn has ten gods, the way its religions operate has a lot more in common with typical monotheistic medieval churches than with the high-powered clerics of traditional fantasy games. The gods of Hârn are supposed to be, well, Divine, and they do not lightly enter into mortal affairs. Indeed the average Hârn person has no idea whether the Gods actually exist, rather they **believe** that they exist, and many events attributed to the gods may be natural occurrences, or instigated by mortal members of the church...

The ten Gods are as follows -

Agrik - the fiery god of war, as a god he is often worshipped by those who favour cruelty and violence.

Larani - The Lady of Paladins is the goddess of chivalry and battle, and she is favoured by the nobility in many kingdoms of Hârn.

Halea - she is the goddess of wealth and pleasure, and only women are allowed into the clergy of Halian churches.

Ilvir - is the only God supposedly to live on Hârn, in the Pit of Ilvir at Araka-Kalai. He constructs Ivashu, strange beasts that occasionally escape the Pit and rove out into the wilds of Hârn.

Morgath - the god of chaos and evil, his church is ruthless, and infamous for human sacrifice. Morgathans are despised by **most** of the populace of Hârn.

Peoni - she is the gentle goddess of agriculture and healing, and worshipped by the largest percentage of the populace of Hârn. The Peonian clergy are drawn towards the poor, weak and sick, and seek to help them.

Sarajin - the god of battlelust, honour and braveyr, he is mostly worshipped by the inhabitants of Orbaal, many of whom are descended from Ivinians, a Nordic race from across the sea.

Save-K'nor - he is the god of knowledge and enlightenment, few worship him, but those that do tend to be dedicated to preserving knowledge, and opposed to chaotic and destructive behaviour.

Siem - the benign god of magic, mystery and dreams, he is also the deity of the Sindarin (elves) and Khuzdul (dwarves).

So how do all of these Gods factor into Hârn:Bloodline, you may ask? Well there are shrines and temples in Hârn:Bloodline, and all of the ten Gods are present and accounted for. They can be worshipped, and they may see fit to grant boons to the player. Worshipping certain gods will hinder (but not preclude) gaining the favour of certain other Gods. The choice of Gods will allow benefits that cater to a variety of game playing styles, and indeed the player can completely ignore the worship of any gods if they so choose. On Hârn anyone can pray, and anyone may be the recipient of Divine Intervention. And we are using these ideas in Hârn:Bloodline.

Well, hopefully that'll give you guys some more to chew on...

Just trying to be...

Flex Mentallo

Listening to - Shonen Knife, Happy Hour
Reading - The Thin Red Line by James Jones
Watching - Go! this weekend

Recovering from - a busy week at Siggraph (and an *ahem* tasty lunch at Hooters in Santa Monica) - I still can't believe that there are ChiPs action figures in the States - and how, oh how could they have Jon but be sold out of Ponch - life is full of mysteries!

27th August 1999

Servers coming up!

It's dribble time again, and this time the Mighty Swede is running the show.

I would like to tell you all a little something from the world of Hårn, so I've dusted off my 2nd edition HårnMaster Core Rules.. And no, it's not dusty because it's a lousy game that no one would ever want to play, it's just that I'm so terribly busy making other games that I haven't had time to read it.. it's a shame!

Just to boast a little to my fellow RPG-players.. The copy I've got in front of me is the first signed copy of the 2nd edition... or at least that's what Robin told me.

If you've got any sort of logical sense you could also derive that when I got it, it was the only signed copy.

Oh.. we interrupt for a important message from Flex:

"Some of you may have noticed that in last week's Dribble, the ten Gods of Hårn I was describing mysteriously shrank to nine - mere foolish oversight on my part? Or was it a conspiracy, some cryptic hint as to the plotline of Hårn:Bloodline? Well, I think foolish oversight is probably the most likely candidate! Anyway, our mystery (well except to the Hårn fans out there) tenth God is... Naveh - the god of darkness, the bringer of nightmares. Worshipped by thieves, assassins and other ne'er do wells... Now I must face my punishment for interrupting the Mighty Swede's very Mighty Dribble!!! flex mentallo out."

Well Flex... I'll let it pass this time..but you watch it!

Ok boys and girls, since Flex brought up the subject of gods, let's all turn to page Ch12 and have a read about Piety. "Piety Points are accrued in the course of play by undertaking (and usually completing) pious acts." Well.. pious acts.. they vary a lot depending on which god's favour you're seeking.. Playing hop scotch with elves, feeding the fairies, baking cookies for the trolls and doing all sorts of boring things would naturally make a good god favour you. (Not that elves, fairies or trolls exist in the world of Hårn.. but if they did I'm sure Peoni would be thrilled if you treated them good.)

Kicking little puppies, walking on the flowers, not brushing your teeth before bedtime and killing fluffy bunnies just for fun would get you the favour of an evil god.. Anyway.. you get the picture. Worship is something they all like.. You can build shrines, temples and other cool stuff to please a god. Now.. you might think, what good does this have to do with me? Well.. read on boys and girls, "Characters calling for divine intervention expend Piety Points; often quite a lot of them." I'm tellin ya.. divine interventions are... divine! You sure do want the favour of a god.. they tend to be.. well.. powerful!

And that's it for the Hårn-school...

What else can I tell you.. well.. Ola and I have sunk deep into the swamp of Artificial Intelligence, and we hope we will make life as a Lord hard for you, by coming up with the most clever algorithms to challenge you. I can't really tell you how they work, because that'd take up too much space, but on the other hand you're probably not interested anyway..so let's just leave it at that.

Now... the big news.. We've finally got our new lines.. meaning juicy internet access.. meaning Quake and Tribes servers here at Auran coming up real soon.. meaning less time for all of us with family and friends and more time blasting each others heads off! You're all invited to a Fragfest with the gamers here at Auran. More details soon.. look for it in the next dribble! According to Mr Fish they are actually up and running already.. start up Tribes and do a search for AURAN. And guys.. if you see anyone called Mighty Swede.. could you please refrain from shooting rockets in my face.. I'd like to get some high scores for a change!

Oh.. and anyone called Blahnana or Pete are your main targets OK? See you there!

Over and out.

The Mighty Swede

Listening to: Garbage, Version 2.0

Reading: The last chapters of Machine Learning

Thinking about: Taking up boxing at Gleasons Boxing Gym

Waiting for: Killing Heidi's new album

3rd September 1999

But the Soul Still Burns!

Greetings O Dribble-fans. Before I give you the low down on the state of Hårn:Bloodline play, let me quickly take you on a tour of the Stage of History. It's been two solid, bloodthirsty weeks of Dreamcast Soul Calibur action, and the SOUL STILL BURNS! Yep, it's a hell of a game. Now that overt button mashing has given way to attempting to play properly (well, mostly... there's no convincing the Dribbler), many interesting battles are fought. Phoenix's Taki probably has the stats, but there's been significant winning streaks from Flex's Sophitia, Gutter's Voldo (er... yeah...), Strontium's Cheeseheid, and SprayNWipe's Kilik. Good stuff.

To Hårn:Bloodline! Probably the biggest development has been the implementation of the new and improved camera system. Strontium has been busily tweaking away, and has now got an admirably smooth and twirly camera system up 'n running. Pretty slick stuff. Meanwhile SprayNWipe and Gutter have been experimenting with trees. Various placement methods have been attempted -- getting clumps of trees to look convincing is not as easy as you may think! Phoenix has temporarily removed code that stops peasants standing on each other's heads, with the result that Hårn:Bloodline peasants tend to form totem poles when they try to move onto the same spot. No, we're not sure why he did that either. But you don't want to get him angry, or Taki will hurt you...

Flex and I have been busy working on design tools to make the implementation process even more streamlined. Actual content of said tools is top secret, I'm afraid, but I can assure you that they don't involve seahorses. Or fairy floss ("candyfloss", for American readers). There may be a stoat in there somewhere.

What else... oh most amusing feat of the week was probably SprayNWipe's half-assed Hårn:Bloodline gameboy port. The things that can be done with a Swedish import gameboy eprom cartridge of dubious legality and half an hour of free time. Heh.

That's all for now...

Gribbly.

Listening to: Radio National -- if you're in Oz, tune in damn you.

Watching: "Waco: The Rules of Engagement", oh and Xianghua carve up the opposition =P

Playing: VF3tb, the world's best game in the whole world ever.

10th September 1999

Heya Dribbles, and welcome to the Stage of History!

Yep, Dreamcast-Mania still has a stranglehold on the lucrative lunchtime timeslot, with Soul Calibur (see, right spelling this time) taking the crown as most-played-fighting-game, with VF3 surprisingly taking a close second. Continued pummeling has been dished out by Flex (Sophitia), Phoenix (Taki), Gutter (the disturbing, yet strangely appealing Voldo) and of course that all round good guy sprayNwipe (Kilik). Meanwhile Blah's choices of Maxi and Nightmare, and Da Fish's Hwang have many Auranites coughing "Where's the Cheese?!?", especially when the ever-painful and definitely unexpected "Ring Out" flashes up.

But that's not to say that we haven't been busy opening various cans of Whup Ass on everyone joining the Auran Tribes, Quake 3 and Half-Life Counterstrike servers up at games.auran.com - In fact, Skinmeister Flex has created an awesome set of Auran Tribes skins for you, which you can grab just below. These are now deemed Super Sweet(tm), so there's no excuse for not grabbing them!

Grab them here! and read the following instructions:

Unzip the file AuranSkins.zip into the Tribes\base\skins directory on your computer. When you play on the Auran Tribes server at games.auran.com you will now be able to see and use the Auran skins. Or you can use them in your own games by editing the ServerPrefs.cs file in the Tribes\config directory and changing the entries called 'teamSkinX=skin name' to teamSkinX=auran' or 'teamSkinX=auran2' (where X is the team number). - Flex

Back to the Dribble: Unfortunately, the most exciting thing that has happened this week however is also the one thing that I can't talk to you about. All I can say is that a Mysterious Personage has been wandering around the Auran offices, turning straight faced game fans into weak-kneed piles of slobbering goop.

And to stop questions flooding in, no, they don't smoke, they don't wear a trenchcoat and they aren't part of some government conspiracy involving aliens... at least as far as we know...

Anyway, back to the land of Hårn:Bloodline...Gutter is busy getting all agricultural, while Phoenix is about to dive straight into the swirling miasma of creating a global trading system to make all of you budding market entrepreneurs froth at the mouth!

On the S.A.G.E front, Flex, Gribbly and I have been busy slaving away at some S.A.G.E. Design tools, which should make creating S.A.G.E. Games and Hårn:Bloodline Mods easier than saying "Wow! These design tools are really easy to use! I really like them a lot...Bravo, design guys!".

Well, that's all for now...tune in next week for what will (hopefully) be something unexpected. Is this yet another ruse to make people read more dribble? Probably, but can you take that chance?

sprayNwipe
====_==_==_

Playing: Tribes Renegades - this is an awesome mod!!

Listening to: My MP3 collection with the Nullsoft Cheesy Voice Remover enabled

Watching: The new Dilbert TV show

Wondering: What happened to Karen Barlow, and why she isn't the morning news reader on Triple J anymore...

17th September 1999

Fear and Loathing in New Farm

by Dr. Flex 'Gonzo' Mentallo

It was somewhere between Friday and Monday when the Dribble kicked in.

I was accompanied in this foolish activity by my crazed sysadmin, Blahnana, the original Dribbler, a crazed motorbike riding Network Admin of ill repute. I had decided to go in search of the tattered remains of the Bloodline dream, the holy grail known as the latest build of S.A.G.E. What grand new features, what glorious bug fixes would lie within? Where would this blue carpeted road lead...I didn't know.

Time was ticking by, how in the hell would I get this Dribble written in time, and with pertinent information at that. Would I have to fill it with the typical nonsense? Pikachu stared down at me, just staring at me...goddamit you little yellow fiend! That level of cuteness is a sure sign of evil at work!

I thought I should turn to a fellow artist for enlightenment, Gutter was a likely candidate. Goddamit, man, what in the hell has been going on around here lately? Cryptically, he responded 'Bendy Parsyth.'. What in the hell? Could this have

something to do with the 'Bendy Stick Demo' that S.A.G.E. Pimpdaddy Cookie Monster had shown us mere days before. I heard someone coughing *skinned models* under their breath...

It was about then that that crazy Blahnana re-entered the scene, sneaking up behind me and pushing me over! I turned and snarled, 'You fiendish swine, I knew I shouldn't have included you in my Dribble!' He merely laughed and strolled away. It was all I could do to crawl to Phoenix's desk to ask for help.

'Hmmm, I'd like to help you, but I'm too busy coding the Farming system for Hårn:Bloodline! Farms, Flex. agriculture, important in sustaining life in a medieval village! You should know this Flex! Oh and there is no S.A.G.E. Build today, you fool...its Hårn:Bloodline Build Day, not S.A.G.E.! Bloody artists...'

Given what for by a fellow team member! By all that's good and grand! Forsooth and verily!

I staggered on to Strontium's desk, knowing he was a programmer of a more artistic bent.

Before I could say anything he bellowed out, 'Flex, as my attorney, you are supposed to be fishing for material for that hack rag the Dribble! Are you? Good lord, man, look out for the bats!' He started swinging a plastic light sabre around in the air.

'Yeeeeessss...bats...Use the force Strontium!' I cried as I slinked away. I'd seen that crazy look before...in the mirror.

Hey, wait, that's my plastic light sabre! Hmmm, I thought all the craziness congregated around my desk. But no, it was everywhere! Surely Gribbly's office would be home to *ahem* a certain level of sanity.

Strangely enough an air of sanity did hang over McGribbly's office, mainly because he was away *ahem* sick. I guess that massage the other day relaxed that fiend so much that he couldn't move his leg muscles to ride into work today. I'm sure he's at home slaving away at the latest (and final) refinement of the Ricki Lake show, err, I mean the Hårn:Bloodline Design Doc. Over in the corner was sprayNwipe, who couldn't talk because he was on the phone talking about American Express numbers to a mysterious someone! My god man, keep the credit card fraud out of the office!

Well I obviously hadn't dug deep enough. How many paragraphs of this fiendish Dribble would I write before including some information on Hårn:Bloodline?

I could ask the S.A.G.E. guys for news...but those crazy technologists just plain scare me! Well except for the Dribbler's on the S.A.G.E. team, of course, Pete and Mighty Swede, both of whom were promoted to the position of Senior Programmer this week. Go Team Dribble! No, I don't know what that title really means either - my guess is that Senior = Oldest, so using some S.A.G.E. ageing plugin, Pete and Mighty were subject to accelerated ageing in the cause of S.A.G.E. super-pseudo-science! Hurrah!

I cursed my light hearted S.A.G.E. interlude - my integrity was once again in wretched tatters as I still haven't managed to provide any Hårn:Bloodline information of worth in a whole paragraph, indeed in the Dribble so far! So I decided to do the dirty, go back to my desk, and run Hårn:Bloodline...

Hmmm back to NT, its loading...mmm Auran and EA logo AVI, hmmn Temporary Title Screen...Loading...ooh there's VillageMap, our ever-loving playtest map...hmmn where's my retinue...lets go into camera mode...aahh that's where those little polygonal fiends are! There's Parsyth...c'mon buddy, hop into the Village Centre...hey who are these guys walking on...Emissaries...what do they do...Let's build a smith...hmmmn lets send a few peasants to help...hey where are you chaps off to?...well after you're ready get over here and build! Hey the sun's going down...lets take a look at the sunset...ahhh how beautiful...hmmn its started raining...time to quit I think. Go to the Quit menu (looks damn good if I do say so myself!), yep, lets Quit to Windows...Oops it crashed as I quit! Ahh that's the fun of developing games - you gain a love/hate relationship with the crash! Well, no actually you just hate the crash, but they're as inevitable as death and taxes, so you have to at least tolerate them! Hitman over in S.A.G.E. compound 2 is the enemy of bugs - he is a self professed bug mashing machine - I'm surprised he isn't sponsored by Baygon or Mortein...

Just then, that fiend Blahnana walked past, so I lunged forth and pushed him many meters. Haha he'll think twice before pushing me again (actually, no he won't). Game Developer Law #1 - Maturity is for chumps!

'You fool, Blahnana! I have the last push of the day!'

And that was the week that was.

Brought to you by the...

Book of the week - The Rum Diary, by Hunter S. Thompson..ahh Hunter you crazy fool!
Muzak of the week - Regurgitator's shiny new disc, Art
Film of the week - 'And this one time, at band camp...' Yep its American Pie!
DVD of the week - The Rocketeer...'the Rock-a-who?'
Comic of the week - Tomorrow Stories by Alan Moore - as Pop Will Eat Itself once sang, 'Alan Moore knows the score!'
Game of the week - still Sooooouuuuulllll Calibur! And System Shock 2 rocks the free world!

The Soul Still Buuuuurrrnnnnns!

Fin.

24th September 1999

What Green Giant, and why is he jolly?

This has been one of those strange weeks. No fire alarm going off, no coke dropped in the keyboard and no kangaroo attacks. What is the world coming to?

Anyway, it's been a while since we've shown you anything from the game, so we slipped one off to the people over at IGN. And well, why not reuse it in this dribble? Recycling is a wonderful thing.



So what can I tell you about this image?

Can you say vast distances? You might notice that we're no fans of trapped-in-fog games. We hope you're the same.

We have also spent quite some time on getting a nice environment system functioning. It does the usual stuff...you know - making sure that the sun moves fast enough to not drop down on earth...making sure that clouds don't entangle themselves...making sure there is fog to hide the edge of the world - no point in terrifying the small sailing peasants with stuff they don't need to know, is there?

And the big question, why the @\$% do we have a lens flare in a medieval setting? Oh, well...

So what's been happening this week, you say? Well... Artists play with colours, designers do design (presumably), programmers try to out-stare their monitors and management sit in meetings. That's it really.

More specific? Ok, our little bendy squad team (Cookie, Gutter and me) are still playing with a little box, trying to get it to behave. Bend you little bastard!

The problem is that there's this 3D package with a complex about its size, and it's not doing things the way we want it to. In sheer desperation we have finally resorted to the famed Empirical method (also known as "There can't be more than four combinations, let's try them all" *) instead of trying to figure it out.

Finally we nailed some of the problems. Cookie does of course claim that there's some method behind all his madness, but we now better.

And then we have Bandit who made us a web-browser for the game. It's important to keep up to date with certain, hmm, sites while you order the small people around in the Hårn world. You don't really need the second hand anyway.

*) This is known to work with quantities of up to 100 or so. It's all a matter of desperation.

And that's enough,
Pete.

Listening to: In flames - Colony. Amazingly much glam and still metal. Strange it is.

Playing: Clans. You can _never_ get enough of heroic knights running around slashing Orcs in dungeons filled with gold. And that's a fact.

Watching: Letters and numbers flying around in the room. Should they do that?

Thinking: Really?

1st October 1999

Oh no! Not that Swede again..

Oh yes! It's me, I'm back! But fear not my browsing friends, let me tell you, everything has a purpose...perhaps even the Mighty Swede?

They say the appendix doesn't have a purpose, but I think I've figured it out. That must be the place where the diced carrots are stored away for all that time! I mean.. you could swear you haven't eaten diced carrots for months.. but still a couple of tequilas to many, and there they are in the gutter!

Eh.. well... what I'm trying to say is, I'm sure there's a valid reason for why they've put me on writing dribble. I'm not sure what it would be...actually.. I wouldn't have a clue, but hey! Nobody has complained.. yet!

This week there will be no Hårn school, since I proudly present screenshot number three. I'm not sure what sort of view this is supposed to be... the world of Hårn seen through the eyes of a Gargun lurking beneath a bridge?

Well... normally this isn't where you'd put the camera if you would like to control your units, but it shows that you sure could hide out under the bridge with a bag of chips, let the AI take care of your village, and hope the Garguns won't spot the camera and smash it against the stone bridge.



As you might have guessed, we like our game environment to be like the real world with open spaces and fog only where fog is supposed to be. There's too many games out there that give you a feeling that you're running around in a sauna. (no Blahnana.. I wasn't referring to sexual excitement.. I was sort of more thinking about the steam... you know.. fog, steam, lots of it in a sauna..do you get it? ..huh?)

So, what's happening on the floor at Auran... Well.. for you non-Swedes that used to watch TV during the 70's and 80's apparently Doctor Who has landed in our garage (don't ask me..it's an English thing!) ... or maybe it's just one of Robo Girl's more abstract arty things.. or even just a plain old blue phone booth.

Nothing much has changed on the SoulCalibur front either.. the guys are still spending their lunch break trying to dismember each other, cheering loudly when someone succeeds in kicking their opponent out of the ring.

I suppose I could go around and ask everyone what's been happening this week, but last time someone tried that he (Flex) got pushed over and was beaten up with a plastic sabre, so I think I'll pass.. I'd rather get beaten up at the boxing tonight.

Reading: Pattern recognition by Theodoridis & Koutroumbas

Listening to: R.E.M.

Playing: Pirates gold (surely this has to be the best game ever)

Watching: out for Ola's right hook

Waiting for: a piece of Nintendo compliant equipment ordered from Hong Kong

8th October 1999

Well howdy Dribble-partners!

It seems a long time since I've been in the saddle, steering the mighty ship that is dribble up the perilous ladder of semi-revelatory game development periodicals. It sure is good to be back!

Your humble correspondent, Gribbly, is very excited today, and is of a mood to not only offer some insights into the heady world of game development, but also to wax lyrical on one of his favourite topics -- pornog... no wait I mean video games.

First up, I want to talk about why I'm in the half-nostalgic, half-confused mood I'm in. The confused part is because I've drunk too much 'V' (a guarana laced sugar beverage enjoying some currency amongst Auran's trendsetters) then been out in the sun. But the nostalgic part is due to the fact that the Dreamcast I ordered (yesterday, no less, from the champions at www.burn.com.au) just arrived. With it comes Virtua Fighter 3, one of my favourite games.

I was just looking at it, ignoring Blahnanas puerile jibes, and thinking "I simply do not believe that I can have this in my home". I remember two-and-a-half, maybe three, years ago camping outside Timezone (a popular video game arcade -- oh sorry "family amusement centre" -- here in Australia), waiting for them to open up and let me at VF3. This arcade behemoth was years ahead of its time, and I don't think it has been bettered for sheer class. A blend of exquisite graphics and gameplay depth unheard of this side of Q3A. I was always astonished at how so many passed up the -- admittedly more deeply hidden -- treasures of VF for the flash and trash of Tekken 2 (I'm not saying Tekken isn't fun -- it is...). I remember thinking at the time "just imagine having this at home, engaging in virtual combat with a friend. That'd just be the best!". And now that time has come. VF2 on the Saturn sustained me in the interim, but I suspect there will be little looking back with VF3 in the place.

There's a point I want to make, and I'm not sure I can get it across. But it starts with the fact that I hate it when people say "gee, whatever happened to virtual reality?". I think "haven't you seen games recently?" Sure computer monitors and TV's suck, and sure having to use mouse and keyboard and/or twiddly little joypads is less "immersive" than having neuro-cyber-jack implant devices directly wired into your hypothalamus. But so what? It's here and now! Virtual Reality is alive and well and it's called video games! And people say, oh that's not the same. It's not "immersive". What rot. Books aren't "immersive" by those criteria either, but I swear I've been so far absorbed into a good book that I've forgotten to eat, sleep or bathe. Video games are no different -- the extra ingredient, as Marge Simpson might say, is imagination. And a fast internet connection.

So I guess my point is about putting VF3 in its rightful place at this end of a continuum that starts with "Karate Champ" and "Way of the Exploding Fist" (classic arcade/C64 fighting games for younger readers =P). The basic premise of games, so often overlooked, is exactly the same premise as virtual reality -- offer the user access to experiences and

places otherwise inaccessible. Let them fly, dive, kill and die. But, like film, the technical limitations of games demand a willing suspension of disbelief on the part of the player. I don't think this is very much to ask, considering the rewards.

So now I guess my point is this -- holding VF3 in my hand made me realize that virtual reality is there for the taking, as long as you can discern the wood from the trees! It's a great game, and I urge you to try it out.

Hmmm, this hasn't really told you anything about Hårn:Bloodline, has it? Well, for this week suffice to say that I like to think that Hårn:Bloodline continues a proud tradition of video games -- the game as alternate, idealized reality. It is my profound hope that Hårn:Bloodline will live up to this tradition, but only time and Alpha testing will tell...

On a reflective note,

Gribbly.

Listening to: Mr. Bungle, "California"

Watching: Well I watched the Dilbert animated series, and it was OK.

Playing: DC Soul Calibur. Xianghua _owns_ you all!

15th October 1999

Get that thing away from me!!!

Ahh...sweet sweet Dribble! I...um...can't think of anything to say. It's true. It could be because I'm so bloody tired after staying up all night playing through about 8 or 9 game demos that I've been meaning to play over the last month or so. That's the ironic problem of working at a games company - you don't get that much spare time to play games!

So, after being dazed and drugged at 2am, I am going out to buy a copy of Homeworld tonight. This game is hella cool, and definitely gets the sprayNwipe 'Sheen of Approval'. If you are going to buy two games in your entire life, they should be Hårn: Bloodline and Homeworld. Not that I'm biased or anything.

Ho hum...what has been going on at the Auran compound over the last week?? Well the news on everybody's lips (well, okay, blahnana is the only one talking about this) is that all-round script guy Phoenix got married on the weekend! Poor guy, he'll never be the same. It starts off okay, but then there's the nagging and the cleanliness and the constant nagging! "Oh, put the bins out"... "You're not playing that game now, we have to go furniture shopping"... "Drive me to the hospital now before I kill you"... I don't know how he puts up with it. Oh boy, when he's trying to play a manly game of Q3A and she comes in saying "Oh sweetie, can you go down to the shop and get me some tampons NOW!!!" he'll wish he was a swinging single again. Oh mark my words, he'll live to regret it!

Monkeys, Monkeys everywhere!! I think the V is slowly working.

Just on a side note, I've noticed that ever since my last Dribble, BigKid (www.bigkid.com.au) have stopped updating their web site with Dribble items. Was it something I said? Well, I officially bestow upon them the sprayNwipe "Common Sense" award, for finally realising that anything I say isn't newsworthy! Good Work!

Oh yeah, I was talking about Hårn: Bloodline...well, since Phoenix is busy getting incarcerated, I'm now doing today's Hårn: Bloodline Build. This should be interesting, because all of Gutter's Segmented Construction art is being added in as we speak by the Siegfried-loving-cheese-freak also known as Strontium, scripter of many things. Gribbly is working on Animal Sounds as we speak...or at least that's what he says - I could swear I've heard that same goat sound for the last 15 or so minutes.

As for S.A.G.E., some weird things are happening. Dirty things. Naughty things. Things that the S.A.G.E. team have been staying up till midnight to do. They say we'll find out what has happened on Monday, but I'm not sure I can wait until then. Instead, I guess I'll have to hide under various peoples desks late at night and "accidentally overhear" them talking about dynamic link libraries and other boring programmer-talk.

Or I could just go home and play Homeworld. Yeah, that sounds like a better thing to do. More comfortable too.

sprayNwipe

._._._._._._._.

Reflecting: On driving home last night - On my way home, all of the power went out. It was very spooky going past a shopping centre on a Thursday with all of the lights off. Oh, and the fact that there were no Traffic Lights made things really interesting too. Something I've always wondered was what would happen to Pizza places like Pizza Hut and Dominoes in a blackout. Would the Pizzas just get stuck in the oven? Would they burn to a crisp from the heat left over in the oven? And how would they get them out again?

That would really suck for them as well, because people would probably ring up the Pizza places to get food to eat because there is no power at home, not to mention the fact that it is raining. Boy, I wouldn't have liked to order pizza last night. I probably would have had to wait for an hour or even longer for it! And it would suck working there as well with such a backlog of pizza orders to fill.

Watching: Blahnana walking past the window on his way to either the Kitchen, the Bathroom or the Server Room. So that my pure and fragile mind doesn't get bruised, I will assume that it is the Server Room.

[Update: It was the server room]

Listening: To muffled conversations a long way away that I can't make out. Sounds like blahnana talking about something that happened in the Server Room. I feel sorry for the goat.

Waiting: For lunch. Indian day today!

22nd October 1999

Greeting and cheertles, merry conflagrants!

It was a fine old Friday afternoon when Flex sat to create the spicy but sweet melange known to four people worldwide as the Dribble (or Poon Dooblies, in non-english speaking countries). October's crazed sky loomed overheard, and the angry chattering of computational engines greeted my weary but winsome ears. It must be time to forge on, my imaginary faithful assistant cried.

Hårn:Bloodline is hurtling along into the crash barriers at the extreme reaches of the year 1999, as we slide inexorably to the Hårn:Bloodline Pre-Millennium Demo (PMD) at year's end (not a public demo, I'm afraid, so don't send emails asking when it comes out - cos it ain't. Unless you work at EA that is, then you might see it). The Hårn:Bloodline area is a hive of scum and villiany, no, no, wait, its a hive of activity, that's right! Not scum and villiany. Anyway, features have been fairly flying into the game!

Gribbly is still cranking away at the Hårn:Bloodline Bible - essentially a very detailed finessing of the original design document - he's trying to nail every little thing down at the moment, leaving nothing out. Now if you haven't designed a game before, this is a mammoth task...we're hoping if we get a sufficiently detailed design doc we can just run it through the script compiler and *presto* instant game...Hmnn well I can hear the programmer's laughing their collective asses off at the designers now...C'mon, it can be that hard to implement - if I can write 'Hello World'...

```
void main()
{
printf("Hello World!\n");
};
```

...then surely programmers can write a Design Doc compiler - after they finish that Virtual Brain!

(I'll wait with baited breath for the emails from programmers about syntax errors in that one)

Well, I have digressed a bit. Old Mr. sprayNwipe has been doing all sorts of things - mostly notably foolish subgames in the console. He's also done the Magic System at the moment - training mages, their spells, the workings of chantrys...woohoo, kids love magic.

Strontium has been putting in all of the Religious Buildings - the Shrines, Chapels and Temples - and possibly making them do something, too! I'm not sure...

Gutter has been polishing off the construction/destruction for the buildings, and they look mighty spiffy - quite unlike anything else I've seen in a 3d strat game before (not that there's too many of those at present). I think he's also been doing some work with animals (virtual game animals - get your mind out of Gutter's gutter)

Phoenix, well apart from basking in the warm afterglow of his nuptials, I have no idea what he's been up to this week, and he's not at his desk so I can't ask him. Well I'll say he's been programming the Lithuanian Goat Herder sub-game. That seems likely. He's doing the build today, that's something!

Oh and our Producer, well she has been sitting at the desk next to me on and off recently, playing and trying to break Hårn:Bloodline. So has Web Spice for that matter. Could Hårn:Bloodline be the 'chick flick' of gaming, or are we just looking for less biased assessments about the game from those who don't while away the endless days playing a health damaging amount of games? Hmmn, luckily the game doesn't have any of the following -

- a) Tom Hanks and Meg Ryan
- b) A pre-packaged box of Kleenex
- c) a soundtrack by a boy band

So I don't think we are heading down the chick flick route...plus we have swords, death and monsters. No, Hårn:Bloodline is a MANLY man's game. Well, actually, I'm sure its fun for the whole family! That's what marketing loves to hear!

And what of me, Flex Ignatius Mentallo? Well comrades, I have been detailing the Magic and Religious systems for Hårn:Bloodline. The good thing about being an artist and a designer is that when I get halfway through Religion doc and decide I want to redo the concept sketches for the gods, I can. So I did. The feedback seems pretty good on them so far. So I've been knee deep in Chantry's and Spells and Interventions and Revelations and all sorts of other things. And chunks of it are already being implemented which is jolly swell to see!

S.A.G.E. is going through a bit of a reorganisation at present - so we've had a couple of weeks sans S.A.G.E. builds as they rejig and twiddle, providing us with a stronger base to work from - they tell us there will be no changes to Hårn:Bloodline scripts after the rejig, but well, you just never can tell with those programmers...They'll probably give us back the next build of the engine and it'll change all of our lovely Hårn:Bloodline meshes into malformed versions of Rainbow Brite, My Little Pony or the Herculoids at run time. Or maybe not. Still, the changes are so we can speed up development on Hårn:Bloodline and allow us to spit shine the frame rate and game speed. Which is a Good Thing(tm)'.

On the non-working-on-the-game front Sonic Adventure has put in an appearance - which seems to be a cross between some dodgy sub-Mario adventure levels and absolutely brilliant Megadrive-Sonic-in-3d platform levels. The lack of any comprehension of Japanese beyond 'Kohii o kudasai' or 'Conich-wa, Flex-san ' probably didn't help my enjoyment of the adventure bits. Considering it was a bit rushed though, it does make me wonder how totally brilliant Sonic Team's next DC game will be. Oh and we are still playing tons of Soul Calibur and ragging on those players who use top row cheese-ball characters!

Rereading - The Lord of the Rings - I can hear the abuse from Gribbly about Tolkien-esque prog rock lyrics wafting forth already...

Watching - What do you get if you cross manga girls, mech suits, a transformable motorbike, Blade Runner and Terminator? Why you get Bubblegum Crisis! Now on DVD! Gotta love those Knight Sabers...an 80's manga classic.

Wanting to Watch - the English version of Princess Mononoke, surely to be the best animated film ever...

Listening to - the memories of the ringing in my ears from the Gurge and Custard concert last weekend...Custard kicked the Gurge's musical ass IMHO!

And in conclusion, may I present the following literary quote which will, or may, or might, make all things clear...

'...nobody, nobody knows what's going to happen to anybody besides the forlorn rags of growing old, I think of Dean Moriarty, I even think of Old Dean Moriarity the father we never found, I think of Dean Moriarity.'

Jack Kerouac, On the Road

Wherever you go, there you are!

Flex Mentallo.

29th October 1999

Today's Dribble is brought to you by the letter 'V'...

Auran Employees in Drug Scandal Shock. Film at eleven! It's true, kids. Time to stop emulating your heroes in the game development biz, 'coz they're all hopped up on controlled substances. What the hell am I talking about? I'm talking about 'V' -- a "dietary supplement drink" wideley consumed by Auran programmers, designers, and artists. Last night a local news show ran a story on the potentially "harmful side effects" of the drink, but that hasn't stopped the Auran rank and file from inhaling the stuff by the case. The dynamite one-two-three combo of caffeine, guarana and sugar has done wonders for productivity, but at what cost?

Exhibit A: Actual source code produced by Auran programmer after too much 'V':

```
vvvooooiiiiidddd mmmmaaaaaaiiiiiinnnnn()
{{{
pppprrinnntf("My God... it's full of stars....""");;;
}} } } } } } } } } } } } } } } }
```

Time for some serious cold turkey, I think.

Anyway, apart from substance abuse it's been an eventful week here at Auran HQ. The S.A.G.E. engine is undergoing the third week of its metamorphosis into the new, improved, all singing, all crashing... no wait I mean dancing "Jet" engine. I'm sure there'll be an official announcement about the name change soon, but who knows -- you may have just read a Dribble scoop! Hold the front page!

Programming hombres Phoenix (who recently celebrated his nuptials! Isn't that _cute_?) and Strontium, ably assisted by coding/design switch-hitter SprayNWipe are wrestling with the Bloodline source, wrestling it into Jet compliance. Flex continued to his series of character sketches, justifying his incessant surfing of Happy Days sites as "looking for reference material". It's true I told him one of the Hårn:Bloodline characters should resemble Tom Bosley -- but what was with all those nude pictures of Joanie (and even worse, Chachi)? Art ninja Gutter started working on some Rethemi (speaking loosely -- the bad guys) buildings for our end of year demo, as well as setting up a jealousy inducing dual monitor workstation. La-di-da! To top off the week, Games El Presidente Gman took delivery of his shiny new Honda... er... car. I'm afraid I don't know the model.. something like Civil... Civic? [Civic!!!!, it's a Type R and don't you forget it... GMan] Anyway it's very nice, and he tells us it accelerates up to the legal speed limit quite sharply =P

Anyway that's all! Be nice to your mums -- you never know when you might need to ask for money.

gribbly.

Listening to: Flex play my new el-cheapo Casiotone's demo songs. A present from Gman -- thanks dude!

Watching: Run Lola Run. It was cool... but there's no way I'd have given the gun to Mr. Homeless Person.

Playing: VF3TB. Duh.

5th November, 1999

I'm dreeeaaaaming of a whiiiiiiite christmas....

...so I'm definitely going to bail from this stinking hot pile of sand also known as Australia. Yes, a christmas with temperatures below -20C, and waist deep snow...that's what I call a christmas! Not to mention that the dudes here down under eat seafood (!) for christmas... uurk! Obviously they've gotten some sort of brain damage from walking upside down their whole life. Eh.. well... I'd better be nice.. there are about 19 millions of them, and I'm sure it only takes two to kick the ***** out of me!

This and the previous week has been extremely busy weeks for me and Ola (I know I probably write that every time, but this time I really mean it). Actually.. I haven't had time to stop and take a look at what the other guys are doing, but I'm sure they've had a lot to do as well.

Jet is now at an operational level again, and everything seems at last to be back to normal. The AI, that's been designed and worked on for quite a while now, ran for the first time in Jet this Thursday, and we've already produced such splendid demos as: "Schedule man", "The defecting agent" and "Behaviour boy". To our (the two AI dudes) joy, the foundation proved to be solid, and the execution ran (almost) flawlessly... I don't think anyone except a nerd would be impressed by the demos.... needless to say, we're nerds!

Blah the fool was just at my desk, pestering me about finishing the dribble.. he was mumbling something about girls in g-strings and a guy in a blonde wig and tight dress outside our kitchen window. It's amazing how that alley attracts weirdos... just the other day, I saw Flex and Grib out there!

Well... that's about all I have to say.. time for me to get back into the world of AI.

Waiting for: Christmas... finally some snow!

Listening to: REM ... what? Are there other bands?... Why?

Trying to stay out of: Blahs office... (Hey, what's that goat doing here, and tell me again why I should put these cuffs on?)

12th November 1999

Hey there all you cabbages! Eat it!

That's right kids, the old sprayNwipe'ster has become engrossed in the land of Air Hockey! Although nothing to do with Bloodline, Jet, or even Auran for that matter, I think I'll talk about it anyway. Why? Because it's my dribble this week and I'll do what I damn well want to!

Cabbages is the collective noun for a group of Air Hockey players. It's true! And if you stuff up and hit the puck into your own goal, you have to yell out at the top of your voice "Eat It!!!" (or if in New Zealand, "Choice!"). The only thing I don't like about it is that Ms. Wipe is a better cabbage than me, which means that her "I'll play you for taking out the bins" call always results in me waking up at 5am on garbage day.

Oh. That didn't really fill out much of the dribble. I guess I'll just have to pad it with some of the usual Auran news then...

Fading far far away into the recesses of our collective memories is the Melbourne Cup lunch we had down at the Gold Coast last Tuesday. We had a sweep thingie, but since it was more than a week, my TV-influenced brain can't remember who won the prizes! Lets just say that some people won prizes, some didn't, and Julianne took a lot of photos.

Why, that conveniently segues into my next dribble padder! It suddenly struck me a few minutes ago that you have no idea how freakishly bizarre blahnana is! Then I realised that none of you know what the dribblers look like! Then I felt a bit hungry, and got some Pizza Shapes. But after that, I found a photo from the Melbourne Cup day, spent a few minutes with some cheezy Photoshop effects and created what will surely be regarded as the most thought-provoking photo ever known to humanity. I call it "The Dribblers":



Oh, the humanity! Not the best photo in the world, but there isn't any other photo on the face of this earth that has all five dribblers together. And for good reason too!

Anyway, back on to work-related stuff. On the Bloodline side, Phoenix is busy battling away at porting over the Combat System to the new and improved Jet DLL interface. Meanwhile, fellow code-monkey Strontium is busy modelling chaos to create what will probably be the most advanced weather system ever featured in a game! Well, I'm sure it will be after he fixes the "Ground-Temperature-Keeps-dropping-to-absolute-zero" bug anyway - If not, I guess we'll just have to remodel everybody with warm woolly coats :) Talking of modelling, Flex and Gutter have been busy defining the style guide for all of the art in Bloodline. Well, thats what they say they are doing - they seem to be spending a lot of time in inner-city book stores and watching weird 80's movies like "Highlander". Tsch! Artists...

On the Jet side, things are *almost* finished for the unveiling of the new Jet Restructure...The Mighty Swede and his trusty sidekick Ola have been working away at the new AI system, while other members of the Jet team are slaving over hot code, drawing multiple flowcharts, and eating quiche and danishes at their "intense" monday morning meetings...

Unfortunately, it looks like those intense meetings and laborious after-hours Winamp skin design sessions have taken their toll on Cult-Designer Gribbly, who is taking a well deserved couple of days break due to "sickness". (coughVF3cough)...oh well, get "well" soon Gribbly...

Telling it like it seemed after a few cans of V,

sprayNwipe

Listening to: Stuff

Watching: Dilbert. Fun-o

Wondering: if "project y" is related to "project x". or "project ufo". or some other Console/TV series starting with "project". or if I desperately need some sleep. I guess you can't stop sleep deprivation...

Pun of the Week: Did you hear about the guy that lost his left arm and leg in a car crash? He's all right now.

19th November 1999

Ye newest dreeble

Also knowne as

'Much Ado About Nothing'

as penned by Flex Shakespeare

Flex's Cliff's notes for the Shakespearean drama of the Taming of the Dribble, or is that A Midsummer Night's Dribble, or hmmm I'll just get on with it!

To Dribble or not to Dribble, that is the question...[fnord]

This week I present Dribble as a Q and A session as hosted by Liddle Billy Shakespeare! Let the questions begin!

Q. What a piece of work is a Dribbler!

A. Indeed, the Dribblers are troublesome fools who know not what they do. Although not as troublesome as Hårn: Bloodline programmers! That Phoenix is trying to steal my job drawing 'paper doll' men for his Hårnic combat system DLL that he's writing...he has images of icons and hit locations and all sorts of things in there...there's even a 'zzzzz' icon for when one of the units gets knocked unconscious (which happens quite often, Hårn having a fairly realistic combat system and all). [fnord] I'm calling my union! What's next, Strontium drawing clouds for his Weather DLL?? Anyway, flip me your next question Bill!

Q. How noble in reason!

A. Ummm...yeah right William. You are talking about the dribblers here - maybe you should try 'How devoid of morals!' instead. (anyone notice that Shakespeare and Gates have the same first name? There's something to this!)

Q. How infinite in faculty!

A. Well this is true, Dribblers are infinite of faculty. Some [fnord] Dribblers are more infinite of faculty than others - Pete and Mighty Swede, being fearsome Nordic programmers, have far more faculties than the rest of us - but their Swedish king is an odd looking fellow and so they lose all those bonus faculty points for that!

Q. In form and moving how express and admirable!

A. Well we don't move except when playing the Q3A demo - some of our movements in that case could be express and admirable, although quite often they are slow and pathetic...well I only speak for myself there. By the way, if anyone wants to be fragged by low ping pimps try games.auran.com as your q3 server!

Q. In action how like an [fnord] angel!

A. That's a simile! In action like an angel - hmmn yep Dribblers float about the heavens, occasionally get cast of heaven to become the rulers of hell, and star in bad 80's drama shows with Michael Landon.

Q. In apprehension how like a god!

A. Yes, Dribblers are very apprehensive - apprehensive that overly obscene comments are going to be excised from our dribbles, apprehensive that our true identities will be found out thus forcing us to retire from a life of superheroics, apprehensive that Gribbly might start playing Jet by Wings on the *ahem* quality keyboard at his desk...

Q. The beauty of the world!

A. Well I don't get to see it cos I'm inside and hard at work all day 8). I hear it exists though! Actually, the beauty of the world exists in the art redesign that we (the Hårn: Bloodline artists) are currently undertaking - yea and verily, there was much purchasing of reference material, conceptualising and sketching of characters and buildings! This is of course in anticipation of reworking the art as higher res models, to make use of the progressive mesh stuff in Jet! Woot! Jet, do do do do doooooo....JET! C'mon Sir Paul, put down the supermodel and record a special version of Jet for the installer for our engine!

Q. The paragon of animals!

A. How do I know this to be true? Well Dribblers have far more gadgets, toys and doohickies than any animal I've met, thus rendering Dribblers more intelligent! Mighty has a digital camera, Pete has a collection of death..err..German speed metal, sprayNwipe has the Blair Witch Project on DVD, Gribbly has a Dreamcast fetish fuelled by Dreamcast pens, mugs and clocks (oh and a Dreamcast), and I have an amusing collection of toys including a kungfu monkey, an impossibly-large-breasted-Tifa-from-FF7 action figure and a stoned looking Pikachu.

Q. And yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust?

A. Umm, too much crack, eh, Shakespeare me boyo. The quintessence of dust is little particles of dirt, or compounds, or molecules, or atoms, or sub-atomic particles, or maybe even quantum constructs. Yep, quintessence of dust...I actually spend more time wondering about the quintessence of burger joints -what the hell do they put in that crap, it sure ain't anything edible!

Alas poor Blahnana, I knew him Dribbler (although I didn't know him as well as his pet goat did!)

Anyway, enough of this silliness, I weary and tire and begin to feel like old Prospero on his island in the Tempest, contesting with Miranda and the Furies (the Furies also being known around here as WebSpice when Dribble is late).

Listening to - Chu Chu rocket remix, and [fnord] occasionally to Gribbly's jovial and almost melodic rendition of Jet on his keyboard.

Reading - The Two Towers, the second part of the Lord of the Rings by JRR Tolkien. It's been a long time since I read this, and goddamn its a good set of books, it just reminds why I have more or less given up reading fantasy novels.

Watching - not much, B5: Crusade, which is getting better as it goes along, well until we get up to the episode where it was axed. 8(Flipping the bird to - Phoenix and Gribs since they are throwing nerf at me...and at Mr. Fish in tech support, because, well, he's just asking for it!

This could be the Dribble motto!

'We few, we happy few, we band of brothers;
For he to-day that sheds his blood with me
Shall be my brother; be he ne'er so vile,

This day shall gentle his condition:
And gentlemen in England now a-bed
Shall think themselves accursed they were not here,
And hold their manhoods cheap whiles any speaks
That fought with us upon Saint Crispin's day.'

Yo G! Peace, homes!

Flex Mentallo.

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26th November 1999

Hello.

My name is Janitor Fred. I clean the toilets at Auran everyday for the ungrateful swine known as "Game Developers". Hah! They couldn't develop a game out of a paper hat! Back in my day, we didn't need "Game Developers" - we were quite happy with Real Men games like "Hackey (grenade) Sack" and Mud Wrestling. Oh no, but not these excuses for human life, they play their namby-pamby Quake 3 and their lame Soul Calibur thinking they are oh so tough, and then they go home to what - a bed! Back in my day, we were lucky to get eight or nine rusty nails to sleep on, and we liked it! If you ask me, they all need a good dose of national service - that'll make them grow hair on their knuckles...

Well, lets have a look at this weeks dribble by that lazy no-hoper sprayNwipe. Hmm.....yes....yes...well....

The rest of that Hårn: Bloodline team is no better. That layabout Gribbly isn't even in the office! Probably at home playing on his Sega Dreamcast. Dreamcast! The Intellivision was and still is a much superior gaming system. And talk about gaming variety! Pong, Tennis, Doubles Tennis, Ping Pong...the list is endless! And we didn't need fancy coloured buttons or "difficulty levels"!

And what about those poor excuses for programmers Phoenix and Strontium. Phoenix seems to be pretending to work on the "Combat" system, but I know what he's doing - he's thinking of spending his free time painting little figurines in a pathetic attempt to get "friends" to come over and "role play" with him. Hahahahha! and all Strontium does all day is work on his "Weather" system and listen to "Tech-no" music! If I wanted to listen to a collection of hissing and boom-booming, I'd go to a steel factory (not one of these "modern" ones however, no siree bob - I'd go to one with real Aussie men working 24 hour days, and sometimes even 24 hour nights..). No, If you want real music, you should listen to real bands, like Jethro Tull, Duke Ellington, and Wings.

Gutter is apparently busy working on the Hårn: Bloodline Style Guide for which the other artists are creating concept art for. At least that's what I wish they were doing anyway...

Meanwhile, those Jet programmers are up to their usual mischief. Well, so I hear...I leave the delightfully awful task of cleaning up the Jet area to Bubbles, my assistant monkey. He usually comes back muttering such pearls of wisdom as "Mragh Mragh Ooga Mragh" and "Maargh Maargh OO Margh".

Still, it's better than a slap in the face with a wet Pikachu...

Janitor Fred.

Janitor Fred's thought of the Day: Sometimes you have to be careful when selecting a new name for yourself. For instance, let's say you have chosen the nickname "Fly Head." Normally you would think that "Fly Head" would mean a person who has beautiful swept-back features, as if flying through the air. But think again. Couldn't it also mean "having a head like a fly"? I'm afraid some people might actually think that.

3rd December 1999

Hello all..

This time I'm prepared.. yes, I'm actually starting to write my dribble several hours before the deadline as opposed to several minutes the last time. Not that I think this will affect the quality of my work.. oh no.. it'll still be crap.. just more of it.

Let me tell you a little something about Dung beetles...

Yes.. dung beetles... peculiar little things those... after they've had their party and laid their eggs in a little hole, they grab a ball of dung and carry it to the hole to seal it. The funny thing is that if you take the dung ball away from them while they're carrying it, they'll happily continue and seal the hole with their imaginary dung ball... Obviously they've evolved from an advanced breed of public service dudes.

Beetle1: "Oh.. This dung ball is really heavy *blink* *blink*", and I have to carry it the whole way to the hole before I can take a break."

Beetle2: "Maybe I should help you carry that heavy ball *blink* *blink*", and we can both have a cup of brown goo afterwards"

I don't know if it's an universal trait, but it sure sounds like two Swedish public service dudes helping each other copy a PM before the coffee break.

The most exciting thing that happened at the Auran offices this week, was that Auran won an Australian Export Award... yay! Now we have a super new trophy for our boardroom. There is some more info about the award in our press section.

The happy peaceloving people at Auran have been busy little workers as usual. Pete has been adding support for Intel's MRM (Multi Resolutional Meshes), and Miss Shenava '99 has taken up painting again, and is producing lots and lots of beatiful sketches and watercolours of groovy things for Hårn: Bloodline.

Rumour has it that some dudes from BigKid are coming to Auran next Friday to challenge us in a game of Q3Demo... hey, we're gonna kick some BigKid butt.. that's for sure! May it be a fair game, and like Tolstoy says in War and peace "Sprodn da Gagarin Gulag da kolchos perestrojka de rabata RailGun.. molotov pravda RailGun traktor" (Actually I'm not gonna kick any butt despite what Tolstoy says, since I'll be on the other side of our little planet by then, and a 2 second ping is not my definition of fun.)

Tonight the Auran people are gathering for our annual Christmas celebrations. This year in 60s style, with appropriate food, spirits, jukebox music and butt ugly clothes... I'm sure the cheese will flow, as our official party fixer, Ami, has an ability to come up with various games and events. A few people have taken precautions by making sure to leave the country. Flex "I won't eat cooked fish" Mentallo fled to sushi-land last week, and will be away for several weeks.

Well, I have to get back to work, so I'll leave you with my favourite quote:

Rudyard Kipling - "And so it was that Mowgli came to live in the jungle with Baloo, who taught him everything from finding a good meal of ants to camp on the quad... although Baghera didn't approve of the rocket jumping. 'You shouldn't teach that meatbag all the tricks!' he used to say."

--The Mighty Swede
legitimised quote forger

10th December 1999

Hey?!? Where are all the Dribblers??!

It's sprayNwipe again...which begs the question "Hey! You dribbled the week before last!! What the hell???" Well Flex is overseas in Japan, purchasing various Pokemon toys, Gribbly is working from home on various Hårn: Bloodline things (coughVF3), The Mighty Swede did it last week, Pete is in a GeForce-induced coma, and blahnana's just damned lazy...er...I mean, hard at work on Network Admin stuff! So, I guess that means that I have to do the dribble! What larks, Pip!

The biggest news of this week would have to be the full release of Quake 3: Arena! Those fine folk at id have produced yet another polished masterpiece, and from my slightly limited playing of it, pulled off a really fun single player game as well! Now, all we need is Rocket Arena 3, Operation: Bayshield Returns, and a mission pack (or would that be NetPack 2?) from either Ritual or Rogue, and I'll never have to go outside again!

The thing is, we get bored laying smack-down to blahnana and Pete all the time, so sometimes we bring in more people for our ever-growing army of the undead. Did I say army of the undead? Oh, I meant to play some fun and friendly games with! Today's victims are the five vibrant and exciting members of BigKid (www.bigkid.com.au), who will be tasting the distinctive style of Auran Whup-Ass sometime this afternoon! Hell, we might even record some demos of it for the rest of the world to see ;)

The main reason I haven't played much Q3A is because my Nitro-enhanced Dreamcast arrived during the week, along with Sega Rally 2, Toy Commander, and Marionette Handler! Toy Commander is definitely the surprise hit, with some awesome and unique missions like "Cook some eggs using a fighter plane and truck". A big thanks to the guys at Burn (www.burn.com.au) for the same-day delivery required to satisfy my Geek Toy Deficiency :)

Now, for a bit of a change in pace - here's what the Auran team is doing, in the Haiku style:

Strontium's a weather pimp,
Coding wet Bloodline Systems,
Should be really good.

Phoenix is to fear,
Script work makes him nauseous
Bloodline Core is near.

Flex is not here now,
In Japan shopping madly,
Bring back Pokemon.

Gutter's getting hitched,
No more single life for him,
Ha ha ha ha ha.

sprayNwipe's designin'
Last mission should make you go,
into drooling fit.

Gribbly is home working,
More likely playing VF3,
Winamp skin is stale.

Jet Team workin' hard,
Progressive Mesh looks sweet-ass,
Can't wait for alpha.

c.lynn is here now,
New Hårn: Bloodline artist with skil lz
Slaving over art.

That's right! We have a new artist! c.lynn is her name, and she's flown all the way from sunny France - the home of tasty baguettes! She's here as a mean 3D modeller, who should help make Hårn: Bloodline the sweetest looking thing since Gourmet Haus started spelling my name right.

Feelin' Fine,

sprayNwipe
==_==_==_==

Loving: The new McDonalds McFlurrys with crushed Oreos!!! Finally, something to replace my Double Quarter Pounder cravings!

Waiting: For Indian food...should be here any minute

Disappointed: That the Killing Heidi album "Reflector" has been pushed back to March 2000

17th December 1999

Greetings O Dribble Fans!

Tis I, Gribbly, who has not dribbled much of late, but is dribbling now like he has never dribbled before. Which reminds of something I've always wondered. Why do people say someone is "dancing like they've never danced before" when they're trying to say that someone is dancing really well? If you've never danced before, are you not likely to suck? If I said "he's performing heart surgery like he's never performed heart surgery before!" you don't automatically think "wow, that guy must be **really good** at heart surgery". No, you think "call the police!" or something like that.

Anyway. To other matters! (That's a toast -- prosit!)

I am not really qualified to tell you what's been happening in the office over the last week or so, since I haven't been here. I have been working from home, slaving away over a document called the Hårn: Bloodline Narrative. Basically I've tried to tell the story of the game in a traditional short story format. It reads a little strangely, to be honest, because obviously in a linear format like a short story I can't account for all the different choices a player might make. So I chose one path through the game, and described that, trying to capture the "feel" of the game. It was fun, and I hope it's helpful to my fellow Bloodliners. It's a little bit of holiday reading for them, at least :)

Let me tell you this: Gone are the days of a writing in the bathtub, a parrot on your shoulder and a tumbler of scotch at your elbow. That was fine when the latest in writers tools (aka "procrastination aids") was the 1936 Underwood Special mechanical typewriter, but my Gateway laptop doesn't like the bath. And I don't have a parrot, or like scotch.

Young Phoenix and slightly-less-young Strontium have been mastering the art and science of coding AI the Handsome & Mighty Swede way. This morning, Phoenix proudly showed me two peasants doing exactly the same things they've been doing for months. I was, perhaps, not quite as excited by this as he anticipated, so he explained that the way he made them do it was totally different. I'm sure it's all for the best!

Of course, in the way of non-Hårn: Bloodline related news, there was the now legendary Auran vs. BigKid Quake III tournament. This was such a big deal that I actually bothered to come into the office that day. I couldn't help noticing that Big Kid posted a story with the headline "BigKid owns Auran in Q3", along with a **ahem** carefully chosen fragcount screenshot. Now that's not my recollection of events. They way I saw it from 5:30 through to 7:30 when I had to go was that the Auran boyz -- especially Blahnana and Who Was That/Campin' Man were nestled comfortably in the top spots, with ReemeR and mOenadz (clearly a reference to Leibniz' "Discourse on Metaphysicz") settling, like a school of fish poisoned by industrial effluent in a Tokyo bay, at the bottom. The demos (as recorded by ace reporter sprayNwipe) show yours truly yielding first place only to Handsome, who simply got lucky, let's face it. Of course they **claim** that they started to clock up the frags after 8:00pm -- conveniently after myself and SprayNWipe (ace reporter, remember?) had left.

Anyway, my point is that **we** r0ck and **they**... er... fail to r0ck. OK? Just kidding, of course. I'm just a BigKidder.

I think that's all. I really do. But did you realize that you just read the last dribble of the millenium**. The next dribble you read will be new improved 21st Century Dribble!!! That's right. Now I hope everyone is clear on their responsibilities in the new millenium. Just in case there's any confusion, let kindly old aunt Gribbly spell it out for you:

(1) You are required to wear colour coded tunics at all times. Colours are arbitrarily assigned by the Generic Centralized Authority Figure (see (2)).

(2) You are at all times to behave as if there is some sort of Generic Centralized Authority Figure. Evidence of this "GCAF" may take the form of a) Thought Police, b) Hidden Cameras, c) Men in Black, d) Little Drone Robots with Monotone voices or e) Hugo Weaving with a hearing aid. The standard manner for implying the presence of a GCAF is to look guiltily into the top corner of the room whenever anyone mentions something that sounds kinda fun.

(3) On no account are you to eat real food. All nutrition should be gotten from tiny nutrient pills, or from symmetrical, unnaturally coloured foodstuffs that come out of a machine with a sliding hatch on a tray.

(4) You will appreciate flute music. I know this sounds odd -- I mean the flute's pretty archaic, right? --- but the fact is I have a big flute resurgence planned, and I would appreciate your co-operation.

Well, Merry Xmas, Happy New Year and all that sort of thing. Don't do anything WebSpice wouldn't do (believe me, that leaves the field **wide** open =P).

Gribbly.

Listening to: Fantomas. Well, perhaps *_enduring_* is a better word...

Watching: My bank account disappear from buying things for our end-of-civilization driving trip to Uluru.

Playing: NFL2K on the DC. Can Sega make games, or can Sega make games?

7th January 2000

Hello all, and welcome to the new millennium, Dribble-style!

(or, for those of you who are date-pedantic, the last year of the second millennium)

Well, another millennium, another dribble. If you haven't noticed, we've been away for two weeks, visiting things that we haven't seen for a year, like "partners" and "family".

The good news is that this summer would have to be the coldest I have ever seen. Which is not necessarily a bad thing - being from Sydney, I'm not exactly used to the 40C heat that Queensland usually experiences in summer. The other good thing about this summer is that the Air Conditioning actually works this time around, saving various Auran employees from melting into a big pile of goo.

Usually here, I'd tell you what everyone on the Hårn:Bloodline team has been doing this week, but since most of us have been returning to the groove of Hårn:Bloodline, I'll delight you with what the Hårn:Bloodline team did over our two week break:

I spent most of my time playing Gran Turismo, Um Jammer Lammy, and Sonic Adventure. Oh, and I celebrated some millennium thing.

Phoenix spent his holidays talking to his brother who returned from Melbourne. And he bought some new clothes. Woop de doo.

Strontium seems to have gone insane. He claims to have been going to endless ping pong parties, where he was accused of the murder of a hooker. After the fourth day, apparently, he managed to become acquitted thanks to some cocaine. Don't ask me what it all means, I am simply quoting what he told me.

c.lynn went back to her home in Paris, and did what she usually does on two week holidays around a millennium.

Miss Shenava '99 went and built a house. I am still quoting what people have told me.

Gutter had a pretty boring holiday. He got married, went to the Maldives, Singapore and Malaysia, had his birthday two days ago, and became the proud father of a new DVD player.

Gribbly went outback into the centre of Australia. He still hasn't returned.

Flex went to Japan. We got a postcard from him, basically saying that he was alive and that he's been to every place that contains the words "Polis", "Joy", "Sega", "Chu", and "Hello Kitty".

Intellectual Spotlight

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I've been informed by the powers that be that some people think that the dribble "should be a tad more mature in its format" and that "all the dribblers sound like brain-dead idiots". Well, to counter that, I present the Intellectual Spotlight, where I shall discuss various gaming issues that have concerned me since the last dribble.

Our first (and only) item on today's agenda is the latest update to the Dark Reign 2 Designer Diaries up on Gamespot. This is a great article which describes some of the hassles game developers face when releasing a game, as well as a few reasons about why games are "occasionally" late.

However, Greg's final thought intrigued me:

As a final thought, people seem to think about games much further in advance than they do about any other form of entertainment. I bet you can probably name ten games that you are looking forward to next year, but how many movies can you name? And movies are delayed all the time as well.

I'd have to disagree here, and say that the gaming industry seems to be somewhere in between movies and music. I personally feel that anyone who is deeply involved in an industry is going to know what products will be evolving in the next twelve months - there are probably some movies that we as consumers don't know exist, yet hardcore movie buffs have known about (and are anticipating) for a while - Hitchhikers, The Matrix and Terminator 3 are excellent examples of this.

Also, on a slightly different topic but relating to the last sentence, most movies are delayed after they have been filmed! Whereas games get delayed when..well..they aren't complete. Comparing movie delays to game delays is completely unfair. Let me put it this way - If "The Blair Witch Project" was a game, it would have been released when it was finished, which would have been 12 months earlier in Australia. Yet, if "Quake III Arena" was a movie, it probably wouldn't be released for another few months in the US, and then a few months after that in Australia.

In conclusion, good article, but I, sprayNwipe, whos opinions don't reflect those of Auran or any of their employees, pets, friends, games, game players, iguanas, trained monkeys or one-eyed elbonian moose, disagree with the final thought.

sprayNwipe

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Listening: To the new Foo Fighters album...it's actually (suprisingly) pretty good.

Yelling: At RealJukebox for not getting CDDb information correctly.

Enjoying: Ummmmmmmmmm JammerLammy!!

14th January 2000

Welcome to the stage of history!

Flex Mentallo has returned...and the soul still buuurnnnss!!!

Well, yessiree, I'm back at the helm of the Dribble, after a month and a half in the Land of the Rising Sun. I realise some (or more likely none) thought I had gone the way of Paula Abdul's singing career, never to be seen again, or perhaps lost in a snowdrift with only a Mars bar to sustain me...but here I am!

So, it's a new millennium, which despite a dearth of Y2K civilisation-disrupting disasters, still gets to be too cool for school since we can all now constantly say, "Hey man, it's the 21st Century." and "Oi! Where's my steak in a pill? Oh, it's in the hover car. OK, I'll strap on my jet pack and go get it!".

You may notice the Who Am I? button at the bottom of this page, well, yep, it's Dribbler bio's. Why people want them I don't know, but they're there, as stupid as any regular Dribble reader should expect. Don't say you haven't been warned!

So wassup with Hårn: Bloodline?

Well we are getting a major Jet deliverable at the end of this month, which contains a whole bunch of new and improved and somewhat finished systems, and we are getting some new tools to play with - Bandit had his animation editor up and running the other day, and there's more a'coming. Kids love Jet deliverables!

Strontium and Phoenix are doing programmer things...I believe they are working with the spiffo AI system created by Jet Swedes, Mighty and Ola. Now AI as a gamer knows it is concerned with how well a computer player plays the game as an opponent or ally (such as a computer player in Dark Reign or a bot in Quake 3), but AI is often used by us (and plenty of other developers) to control all sorts of lower level things for controlling units and other entities in the game world, for both computer and human players. Anyway, our (Jet's) AI system is tightly integrated into the way Hårn: Bloodline works, and seems to be pretty damn flexible. For those that remember and maybe played with the Dark Reign AI, well, I think you'll like what we've got in terms of configurability and power in Hårn: Bloodline...although we'd like to make the editing process a bit more accessible to you guys - but that is an issue for another day!

On the art side, Gutter and c.lynn are putting Maya through its paces, so we can, in the not too distant future conduct a Maya vs. Max fight to the death - may the best app win! Maya is damn good, but also damn expensive - but sometimes ya just gotta pay the price! It has very powerful animation tools, and comes with a nice, nice renderer out of the box (or

should I say boxes - there's four). We are using progressive meshes in Hårn: Bloodline, so we need a tool that can create and animate reasonably high poly models without falling in a heap. We have a LOT of animation in Hårn: Bloodline, and this is an area I think will really stand out...we have used animation in a few ways that haven't been seen in RTS or RPG games before...AFAIK anyway.

I have settled back into whupping the interface into shape - doing conceptual stuff for our art redesign and so on...our interface is a bit different to most (but not all) other game interfaces, we have used floating windows, popup menus, and other popup components such as toolbars - there aren't any fixed interface components that take up screen real estate. Also, we are trying to make the interface as familiar as possible to all of our users, which given our target platform are all Windows users. Often the urge to iconify everything takes hold, and you end up with an interface full of indecipherable icons - we definitely want to avoid this, so we are only using icons where appropriate...of course once we get into testing it will probably all get changed 8)

sprayNwipe has been in his corner of Gribbly's office doing something this week - playing with his light sensitive Pikachu is my guess. He is in a programmery discussion at the moment so I can't ask him what he's been doing, either.

Gribbly and our producer, Tricia, have been plotting out what needs to be done, redone, polished and/or refined for our Pre-Alpha Build which is the next phat-ass milestone we have to make. Gribbly also handed out the Hårn: Bloodline Narrative this week, which is his prose interpretation of the ingame cinematics and also of the actual game, just to provide everyone with a solid overview of how everything will hang together, and also to set the mood and atmosphere of the game, without having to have all of the art, sound and scenario assets in the game. The story is pretty cool, I think, and is solidly integrated into gameplay. It draws on a lot of areas from the world of Hårn, and hopefully a lot of the background will come across in the game - we don't want to resort to using reams of text outlining the history of Hårn, rather we want to give you this information in small doses throughout the game and in a variety of ways.

And that's Hårn: Bloodline at the moment.

Since I carted my digital camera around Japan, I thought I'd put up a photo that shows why Japan is just too cool - a giant Shenmue billboard in the middle of Akihabara Electric Town...



Hmmn Shenmue launch day was fun...I wish we had Laox stores in the west...

That's all for this Dribble!

As my favourite Japanese advertising slogan says, "Color. That's Holiday!"

Stuff for the week

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Listening to : Pizzicato Five - International Playboy & Playgirl Record, David Bowie - Low, Secret of Mana Original Soundtrack, FFVII Soundtrack, Science Ninja Team Gatchaman Opening and Closing tracks.

Watching : Being John Malkovich - what a cool movie, damn funny and weird, and Buffy the Vampire Slayer now that its on at a better timeslot...oh and The Matrix and Patlabor 1 and 2 on DVD...

Reading : Path of Daggers - 8th damn Robert Jordan, Wheel of Time book, his writing style and structure is not too good, but the scope of the thing is huge, and there are some cool bits and pieces, and anyways I've read this far, so I guess I'll have to see the series through to the end now. Condensed and edited this could have made an excellent trilogy.

Playing : all my new Dreamcast goodies - Shenmue, Soul Calibur, Chu Chu Rocket, VF3, Virtua On Oratorio Tangram, Space Channel 5...DC rocks my world...Space Cat...Neko...eat... chu...mouse...rocket...Left, left, shoot, shoot, shoot...Dream...cast....over...load...

21st January 2000

"Yippee-ay-I-don't-know"

I want to apologize in advance. Compared to Flex's momentous dribble of last week -- a generous cascade of musings on Japanese video games, Bloodline updates, introduction of the new dribble profiles, and entirely gratuitous Paula Abdul references -- I am afraid this week's dribble will be a mere thin trickle of warm spit.

Why? Because it's too damn hot in this country, that's why. Brisbane, QLD is a place of many virtues -- but it can be very demanding in summer when the mercury hits 40 celcius and the humidity is still in the 90's. It takes all your energy just to remain conscious! You are reading a dribble written by a weary and brain-dead Gribbly (don't say it).

So... Hårn: Bloodline. No spectacular advances were made this week, but the end of January and the delivery of the revamped Jet systems looms ever closer. Gutter and c.lynn continue to put the mighty Maya through its paces. They were joined this week by sprayNwipe, who put MEL (the Maya Embedded Language) to the test. The result? Not sure yet :) It must be noted that sprayNwipe could contend with Flex for the "neat t-shirt of the week" award (we actually have one of those -- or we would if I wouldn't keep winning with my Mr. T "Ah Pity Tha Fool!" shirt that I haven't washed in 11 years) with numerous new T's he ordered off that internet thingy. He's a demon with a credit card, that one. Flex himself kept himself (mostly) out of mischief by doing a revision to the Hårn: Bloodline interface. His new dialog template is an object of great beauty... clean... efficient... crazy like a fox...

Phoenix and Strontium continued their wacky AI endeavours. Unfortunately they can't show me anything really exciting until after this end of January update, so I can't give you much news there. In general, Phoenix set the fashion world on its ear with his selection of smart casual shorts, and Strontium won't shut up about the "climate control" in his ritzy apartment. Pimp.

And since you are here in the Hårn: Bloodline section of the site, you may as well go and check out the new and improved character descriptions that have been added to the sketches pages.

I really truly think that's about it, and I'm allllllll hot and bothered so I'll stop now.

Gribbly.

Listening to: VAZ

Watching: my weight :)

Reading: Idoru by William Gibson (so I can read the sequel!)

Playing: Grim Fandango (better late than never =P)

28th January 2000

Demo & drinks!

Last night we (the Swedes + girls) went to the Lyric Theatre here in Brisbane and saw The Hobbit.. I must say, it was rather good actually. They'd really made an effort with the lighting and effects, and from the balcony where we sat, you could hardly see the puppeteers running around in their black clothes and hoods. Unfortunately the place was packed with snotlings that had to ask their parents silly questions about the plot all the time... What has the world come to?? You can't even go and see a puppet show without bumping in to kids!!! Well... anyway, it was really good... catch it while you can. Heh..I just love the quote from the Herald Sun about the show - "Better than Disney and Doom combined" ... Yep... I can definitely see that... the little mermaid blasting off a BFG in Cindarella's face - "I smell like fish? Oh yeah! Burn to a cinder!"

The 'open area' at Auran has been bustling with activity this week. As a matter of fact, today has been proclaimed 'demo day', and everyone gets a chance to show off a bit of their work to the coworkers.. I'm sure it'll be exciting (especially as drinks and snacks will be served). I'll try and give you an idea of some of the things that will be shown. c.lynn our newly acquired rollerblading French beauty, will be showing her high poly count characters, with the help of brush wielding whiz Miss Shenava '99. Flex, will be showing off the new look of the interface, and has also given Pev and Ben a hand with the new look of the terrain. The work of our other newly acquired coworker, CJ (yes, we have a few name clashes) will be shown off as a part of the AI demo. The AI demo... yes, Ola and I have had great help from Phoenix, Strontium, and Bandit... and it's looking ok... Though I almost had a nervous breakdown when the awareness decided to stop working an hour ago... fortunately we managed to track that one down.. we wouldn't have been able to show anything if the awareness didn't work, so I'm quite relieved.

This week has even seen the birth of a new spell, the "Quaternion curse". When playing an animation, a peasant suddenly exploded, bodyparts flying in all directions... quite amusing actually. The explanation was (for those of you with a mathematical mind) that someone had forgotten to normalise a quaternion.

Well... I'm in a hurry... I gotta get back to work! See ya all around!

-The Mighty Swede

4th February 2000

It is summer.

The office air conditioning has broken down.

I am quite hot, since I reside in what has to be the hottest part of Auran (and the furthest away from the now-broken air conditioners). But that's okay. "Why?" do you ask? Two words:

Crazy Taxi.

We recently saw a few videos of this unbelievable Dreamcast game, and instantly I have begun obsessing over it. More so than the Hårn: Bloodline team collective obsession over Soul Calibur. Must Have Crazy Taxi.

(Can you tell that the heat has sapped what was left of my comedic energy ;p)

I saw Dogma last night, and I can safely say that this is the best black comedies I have seen in a long time. If you haven't seen this movie yet, and you aren't easily offended, you should stop reading this now and go and see it.

But you aren't here to read my ramblings, are you? You want to find out about Hårn: Bloodline!

Today is officially the end of Week 1 of the Whirlwind Hårn: Bloodline NME schedule! What does this mean? Well everybody has been scrambling around to implement as much of Hårn: Bloodline as possible into the so-new-it-still-has-the-plastic-tags-in-it Jet engine.

I'll give you an idea on how huge this task is. To the left of me, I have two printed A3 sheets of paper, filled with build goals - for this week alone!

A Sample of this week:

- Miss Shenava '99 (who hopefully will retain her crown in the Miss Shenava awards this year ;p) has been creating Peasants and Military units.
- Flex Mentallo has been working on the funky new interface-o-good.
- Gutter however has been working on buildings. Insert funny comment here.
- c.lynn has been getting all environmental, creating trees and rocks and other greenpeacey things
- Gribbly has been....well...he's been working on...er.....I don't know. He just stays in his corner of the office puffing his vintage Havanas, claiming to be "Tweaking the Camera Controls" this and "Surfing for pictures of attractive women...for Tiela research, really!" that.
- And me? Well I've been designing the fantastic Hârn: Bloodline Scenario Editor, as well as the even more uncontrollable Jet Environment Builder!

On a sadder note, we bid farewell to both self-proclaimed Amiga fanatic Colin, and the almighty Pev this week. We wish you both the best, and hope you don't get into too much trouble out there :)

I'm tired. Going to stop writing now.

sprayNwipe
====_==_==_

Watching: Neon Genesis Evangelion, with dubbed english. The only problem is my video store is missing the last 4 episodes (grrrr)...

Still Waiting: for the new Killing Heidi album. Where are you, Reflector?!?

11th February 2000

Flex's Desk, 11/2/2000, 5.50pm.

It twas a dark and stormy night...errr no...

It's a Friday afternoon, and Web Spice is expecting the Dribble.

Better get cracking.

We've just finished this week's demos, marching on to the NME demo at the end of march.

So what's new, you ask? Well there was lots of new stuff...

Phoenix was demoing the crop and harvesting system, and also has been getting more config stuff into Hârn: Bloodline, which is a good thing for -

- a) Designers and artists who want to create the game
- b) People who play the game and want to mod or customise it

Bandit had building construction up and running, although the peasant was using a hatchet instead of a hammer, so it looked like he was chopping the building down more than constructing it. He also was handling some neat interface stuff such as the tabbed Properties dialogs, and speech bubbles, all of which I was creating the art and dialogs for.

CJ was showing the use of the animation system. It's a lot more efficient than having the artists generate animations from one state to every other state.

Ben demo'd the latest iteration of the terrain engine, with a nifty new method of adding terrain detail whilst using less geometry. Nice looking stuff. It was the first week that the new terrain engine was showing textures again, and Ben's coming up with some nice solutions to doing the terrain, which I like since I'll be doing the terrain textures.

Pete showed his multi-res mesh stuff (who isn't these days!), but Pete's written the code to display them in the engine. Spiffy stuff that should allow us a lot more latitude in configuring the game for maximum frame rate on the broadest range of machines. Pete rocks particularly hard goes he's the flag capture man for our team in Q3!

Our resident l'artiste francais c.lynn had done a bunch of nice environmental stuff, trees and rocks and so forth. The trees in particular were real nice, and hopefully the progressive mesh stuff will let us put forests into the game...as opposed to the general trend towards spartan outdoor games. We want lush outdoor environments!

Gutter's crowning achievement this week was his Gutterland Q3 CTF map. After some heated 4 on 4 CTF action last night, Gutter has done some tweaking and we'll be cranking it back up tonight. I think he's planning on putting it up on the net soon, it's really damn good! On the work front, Gutter's been remodelling the buildings in hi-res, of particular note was his really distinctive looking mill - very shmicko!

Miss Shenava '99 was modelling a whole bunch of characters - both male and female Kandian peasants were here focus this week. She has also finished Parsyth, who is the protagonist in Hårn: Bloodline, your main man, so to speak. The detail in the characters she's doing is great, down to really nice details such as the texture of the fabrics and the sculpting in the brooches and ornaments that the characters wear.

My god, that was a somewhat informative Dribble. As was sprayNwipe's last week. What is the world coming to?

By the way, Dawson's Creek is stupid, Blahnana and myself were forced to sit through an episode by a certain unnamed third party last night, and apart from the fact that the characters speak dialog that seems lifted from some teenage self help book that some 'psychologist' would be peddling on Oprah Winfrey, the two most exciting plot points were the fact that Dawson completely failed to get a shag from the new mystery girl at school, and the newly returned ex-insane girl had been unfaithful and shagged an insane guy in the mental asylum in which she had spent the last few TV months...If only it was so bad it was funny...but it wasn't.

Factoid #23 : The translated lyrics to the Chu Chu Rocket ad are as follows :

Chu Chu Rocket Let's save the mice!

Chu Chu Rocket The cat is scary!

Chu Chu Rocket Rockets are excellent

Tsubabababa

Wakarimasen!

Mr. Hodes aka Strontium wanted a mention - so I'll just say he's a railing pimp on Gutterland and I'm going to frag his botty SSSSOOOOOOOO BAD tonight. There's your honorable mention, Mr. Hodes! And Seigfreid is an utter cheeseball in Soul Calibur!

Muzak of the Week is Len, Steal My Sunshine and JayZ, Hard Knock Life

Movie of the Week is American Beauty, goddamn it was good!

Well I gotta go base defend with Gribbs!

But the soul still burrrrrnnnnss...

18th February 2000

Hail and well met, Dribble crew.

It's yer old uncle Gribbly, freshly returned from the weekly Hårn: Bloodline team demo tour. Are we sitting comfortably? Then we'll begin...

First up was International Woman of Mystery, c.lynn (who really needs a new nickname). She was pimping her new reeds, shrubs and trees to the assembled team, who were not shy with their oohs and ahs. Recent... er... technological developments mean that the artists have a considerable amount of freedom to use a lot of polygons in their creations. This means that c.lynn was able to describe a 400 polygon tree as "low poly" (for reference, a Quake 2 player model has around 400 polys...). C'est fou!

Then we shuffled six feet to the desk of Gutter, 3DSMax ninja and QERadiant guru du jour. There we were treated to printouts and .avis of his latest efforts: the Ostler building, the War Stables, the Agrikan shrine (a rather nasty looking affair, with a prostrate worshipper thrown in for atmosphere), and the Magical Faraway Tree (aka "Fyvrian Chantry"). This last was particularly cool. All that was missing was fluffy white rabbits in tweed vests, and perhaps Moonface with a tray of steaming hot pop-biscuits. Aaaanyway...

Another six foot leftward shuffle took us to the domain of Flex Mentallo, who (in a rather surly manner, I felt) displayed his Hårn: Bloodline font -- tech support guru Fishman described it as "Gaelic", which Flex took as some sort of affront to his manhood I think -- and his revamped Command Toolbar. I thought the Command Toolbar was pretty spankin', personally, and can't wait for the next build so that I can ogle it some more. Flex's other achievements this week include doctoring already compromising photos of Blahnana (and Trog, for you long termers) to include even-toed ungulates, and learning some new Pai moves for VF3.

We skipped Strontium, who chose not to favour us with a demo this week -- I'm sure it was only so as not to upstage Phoenix. Strontium's notable contributions this week included a small tantrum because we stopped playing Soul Calibur just when he was getting good at it :) Heh.

Next up was Phoenix, the Hårn: Bloodline programmer with the stylin' new pants, for "Deployment 101". He demonstrated the AI handling a Hårn: Bloodline unit changing roles as it went from civilian to military modes... hmmm... I won't go into any more detail because I'll be giving to much away...

Bandit then showed us new selection code (multiple selection and deselection), new context menus, and revised building placement code. As if that wasn't enough, he cranked up the Jet animation editor -- a handy tool to allow those wacky artists to tweak their animations without having to re-export them from Max. He seemed to be having a few problems with some of the controls, but sometimes it's best not to ask, and to just stand up the back and make sardonic comments. Constructive? Hell, no. Fun? You bet!

And that was it for this weeks demo!

We may soon have a special treat for you regular Dribble readers: the release of Gutter's CTF Map of Extreme Goodness (he called it "Gutterland", but that's why _I'm_ a designer, and he's a... um... whatever it is he does). we have been playi^H^H testing this map all week, and proclaim it OK! Many tense CTF battle have been fought, all of which have featured heroic, skillful play by yours truly, thrown into sharp relief by the bungling ineptitude of my co-workers, especially Blahnana.

And with that... adieu!

Gribbly.

Listening to: Dr. Dre - The Chronic 2001

Watching: American Beauty

Playing: Sonic Adventure International (and a bit of the Sims... but where are the firearms???)

25th February 2000

Hi... It's mi igiin... thi mighti Swidi

I hivi discivird i brilliint bisiniss idii... I'm giing ti miki i firtini miking kiibiirds bi limiting thi nimbir if vivils in thim. Thi kiibiirds will bi mich smillir thin i nirmil kiibiird... *jank* *plug* Well boys and girls... I might make a lot of dough selling these new compact keyboards, but I'm sure as hell not going to use one myself. I'm also working on another idea for a keyboard, a version of the qwerty that I'm calling the qdeddy, where all consonants are replaced with 'd'. Id dedd a did daddd do uddedddadd ddoudd (It gets a bit harder to understand though).

Well... enough with the silliness (yeah right). This week has been taxing... late nights working on the AI. Why do I always say that? I'm sure there's a reason... oh! yes! that's right... I don't have a life... that's why! Oh.. and mum, I promise I go home at 5.30pm everyday and never eat junkfood... and I sleep a lot too... promise!. Taxing yeah...not to mention having to listen to Cookie's bad analogies over thai food. They have a tendency to get worse the later it gets... and if you ever work through the night you get to hear the stinkiest of stinky analogies at about 5 am - trust me, and it's not just the bad breath you develop after 23 coffees.

Lately I've been given the pleasant task of working purely on the JET AI supporting Ola and Phoenix who are now both working on the game side of the AI), which is great, as I get some time inbetween fixes and feature requests to comment and clean up code. Something you don't often get time to do.

And now follows this weeks staff update:

- Benson aka Spree joined our team as web and marketing artist.

- Last weekend, we had a group of experienced Ukranian game programmers visiting us. We took them out for a spin at the Gold coast on a floating barbeque thingo, and skipper George successfully navigated this vessel at full speed (about 2 knots) without smashing into a single thing... impressive! We all had a great time, we are looking forward to the possibility of working with some of them in the near future.
- Strontium, our kitchen demolition expert, and coffee pimp, decided to leave us this week, as he's going back to doing what he loves and does best, web design and programming.. best of luck!

It's also time for the perfect combination again, demo and drinks, where we all get to have a glance of the new cool things people have been putting in during the week. The even cooler thing about drinks day is that you can basically go and grab a beer at 5pm and then sneak straight back to your computer for an hour of Quake 3 CTF in Gutterland25... the place where the fragging is plentiful and railguns go warm.

Well... that's it for this time, over and out.

--The mighty Swede

Listening to: 'The great beyond' over and over and over..

Thinking about: Installing Linux on my laptop so I can program LEGOS

Reading: absolutely nothing but my mail and bug reports

3rd March 2000

Hot water burn baby! Hot water burn baby!

As you can tell, I've gone crazy. Why? Because I have officially decided to give up V, as well as all guaranated and caffinated beverages. Today is the second day of my new "no-caffeine" plan, and I am beginning to see why people call it an addictive substance. For the last few hours, my thoughts have always ended up with one conclusion - Drink Some V. That, and I keep rocking backwards and forwards while muttering in an ancient unknown language. (Although, that begs the question - if it's unknown, how do you know it's ancient?)

The one thing that hasn't been helping me is the fact that my copy of Crazy Taxi arrived on Monday! Ceerazzy Taxi! This has got to be one of the most unknowingly addictive games for the Dreamcast, which everybody should go out and buy NOW! Hours of fun for the whole family!

Also fun for the whole family is Gutter's new Quake 3 map which he released during the week! Gutterland is a non-stop ride of action-packed thrills and spills! And now you can play it in your own home! Just point your browser over here and in no time, you'll be gutting it up!

We have a new staff member to introduce as well. He goes by the name of Roy. He's our new QA manager, which means he gets to whip us when he finds bugs in the Hårn: Bloodline code. For more background info on Roy, visit the press page.

Well, today is the day of the NME Level 1 demo. What does that mean? Well, the Hårn: Bloodline team has a demo to give at the end of this month called the "Hårn: Bloodline: New Millenium Edition".

To help with this, those crazy management people have split the construction of the NME into three levels. Today, we have reached one of those levels.

On our slightly-fuller-than-last-week-plates this week:

Pete & Gutter have been slaving away with the integration of the Progressive Mesh art assets, getting it to a point where we can actually run the game with them working properly!

Gribbly has been busy practicing for his future lounge singing career, asking anybody who comes into the office to tell him the first song they think of. Unfortunately, since I share an office with him, I have to put up with bad Casio keyboard versions of every song ever written, from "Delilah" by Tom Jones to "Smack my bitch up" by the Prodigy. Oh, and he's been doing some help content stuff as well.

Phoenix spent this week polishing up the new and improved Combat System, and from my quick looks at it over the week, it looks very impressive!

Miss Shenava '99 and c.lynn in the meantime have been busily creating progressive mesh versions of various military units and terrain features.

Flex Mentallo wanders the streets at night, hoping to reclaim what was rightfully his. Oh, and he did some shiny new dialogs for the game.

sprayNwipe (hey, that's me!) has been slaving away all week on two things: working with blahnana on getting the Art Asset Migration Path stuff working, as well as creating the two villages for the NME. This involves carefully placing the buildings comprising of a village on a nice piece of curvy terrain, and fiddling with them for hours to get them just right. Then, of course, on the day of the demo, the nice curvy terrain will go and be replaced with a much flatter piece of terrain, thereby requiring me to GO CRAZY!!! WOOP WOOP WOOP DIE ALL WOOP!!! MY PINEAPPLES PAINT THINNER HELPS DYNO FALAFEL! Who's got a lovely bunch of heightmaps then! You're a flat little heightmap, aren't you! aren't you! you small little thing! I'm going to have to kill you all!! YOU HEAR ME!?! ALL OF YOU!!!

Combistuallically Smalthed,

----sprayNwipe

=====

Playing: Crazy Taxi, of course!

Wanting: Caffene

Disappointed with: The current batch of flight sims. They all seem so cheezy and fake. Back in my day we had flight sims like ATP and Falcon 3, now they were flight sims!

10th March 2000

Hmmn, it's Flex's Dribble time again, so it must be time for a game of

Spot the Literary Influence

So us Dharma Bums out on development crazy trail looked down from rocky mount, and saw holy demo a'coming. What endless mysteries of samsara's sorry flesh would pour forth this late on Friday, that's today.

After a whole other 7 days it seems that it must be time again for another real gone Dribble.

The weeks are speeding by - only 3 to go till our demo now.

I've spent a lot of the week working on the test art for our new terrain engine, being developed by Ben. We are using a pretty cool system for our terrain, it looks real nice, and is a bit different to the engines you usually see in an outdoor game - and it seems to run pretty damn fast. Also, it gives me an excuse to ask for a nice shiny new p3 to use as a render box - it took 17 hours to generate the test terrain...and of course my desire for a faster Quake 3 machine isn't factoring into this at all, not one iota...Anyway, the terrain was integrated into Bloodline late this arvo, and will be fully integrated into next Friday's demo...

The demos each week see Hårn: Bloodline becoming more and more solid - there was a whole bunch more of the units, trees and buildings in this week, looking mighty nice indeed - along with some tweaks to the code its all looking good whilst maintaining a solid frame rate. Gutter and Pete have been beavering away on getting the progressive mesh art in and working all week. As far as the units go, the Rethemi heavy foot created by Miss Shenava was looking very sweet, and c.lynn's trees finally had the transparency on their leaves and were looking much better for it. Also, c.lynn has joined in the Q3 fray, and despite saying she's a newbie, I'm not so sure - she was doing pretty well in some of the CTF games during the week.

For the first time you could also complete the scenario, and, well, its just all feeling more complete. The Mighty Swede and Handsome were the culprits here I believe. sprayNwipe naturally failed to show the Victory screen in the demo by

- a) losing to the Rethemi units...
- b) crashing the game...

Maybe we'll get to see it next week Handsome!

Some graphical glitches were fixed from last week - big improvements included unit weapons being displayed, as well as unit's health bars making a welcome return for combat. Combat is still by far the most impressive element of the game, and I think it is our killer feature.

Bandit and Phoenix continued putting lots of little bits and pieces of the game in - Bandit had the Help system and Speech system going great, and Phoenix has been getting the emissary system going, they were running into the Rethemi village center (Manor) throughout the demo, only to be swiftly kicked out and then run off the map again. Apparently fatalities are back in the combat system too, courtesy of the aforementioned Phoenix, but the units fighting in the demo never got one - boohoo 8(Fatalities look cool.

Catrix, as well as being a sterling Q3 Team mate in CTF, had the waypoint system integrated his movement stuff.

And that's about it I guess. Another good demo, busy-ness abounds.

Oh and the PS2 underwent a particularly underwhelming launch - Ridge Racer V looked good but looked less evolved in the gameplay side than Ridge Racer Type 4. Oh well, by the time of the Western release we'll have GT2000 as a launch title!

As Stan 'the Man' Lee often said to the True Believers...

'Nuff said.

Reading : just finished Dharma Bums, by Jack Kerouac (yep he's Literary Influence of the Week!)

Listening to : some Adam Sandler album and the Killing Heidi album, both OK but not brilliant

Watching : Magnolia - disappointing, overlong, but damn funny and good in spots. This would have been great with a few storylines/characters and an hour or so cut from it.

Playing : VF3, and Gran Turismo 2. On a March day, the lord spake saying 'gaming was good'. Then departed evermore.

Its a hard knock life for us...' - JayZ and that goofy Little Orphan Annie

17th March 2000

First, some blank verse:

Dribble high, dribble low, Dribble in-between, Let's obtain permission from our parents, To look at sculpture *sob*

Greetings all! It's your old friend and mine, Gribbly, here to fill you in with the latest and greatest on Hårn: Bloodline.

First up, it's demo day again. Only a couple of weeks to go before our demo is due (a reminder: this is not a public demo, so don't mail WebSpice asking where you can download it). Our coders continue to shovel features in at an alarming rate. Rock (my CTF nemesis... get out of my flag room damn you!) has been working on a sprite rendering system so we can migrate the entire game to a Civ II perspective (just kidding). Ben's terrain is now integrated and is kickin' booty all around the land (or something). CJ's movement system is being gently encouraged to grok hills: "no, not through the hill, over the hill!". The Mighty Swede has been turning his hand to a variety of systems -- context sensitive cursors, our Amazing Notification System(tm) and various other bits and pieces. He's also been bashing his head against the AI. Whether or not this helps remains to be seen. Bandit has been focussing on construction and trying to ensure the units don't end up with tools stuck in their... er... anyway let's just say there's an attachment point problem. Phoenix has made it possible for you to be rude to people in the game. If that isn't enough, his combat system tweaks make it fun to take your antisocial tendencies to the next level. The illustrious Cookie presides over all, keeping everyone in line with the threat of bad analogies and "fusion" saxophone riffs.

The artists have not been idle (well Gutter has, but what else is new?). New buildings (including a particularly spiffing new Chantry), some very comely female combat units and a re-engineered horse have all been seen on screens in the art department. The artists have also been evaluating some new applicants -- we may have some additions to the team soon, it seems. Watch this space. I hope they play Q3A. Flex has been cranking up the terrain in conjunction with Ben. Well, I say cranking up but I mean "spending hours in my office reading magazines because he's 'rendering'." Whatever, Flex. He's also been enjoying a mighty losing streak at VF3 and Q3A. He was in such a bad mood the other day that Blah and I had to hit him with pillow until he cheered up. Well... we think it cheered him up. OK, maybe it cheered us up.

On the design side SprayNWipe has been responsible for adding and subtracting stuff from the scenario. He also wants me to tell you that he won the "Rodo and CyberSpice Gold Star for being the Nicest Person in the Company". Uh huh... this is because he sucked up to them about their t-shirt designs (some of which were way cool, it's true -- vote 5, 6 and

8!). Well, I would like to take this opportunity to award him the "Gribbly Cyan Bagel for being the Most Obsequious Person in the Company". Take that!

Speaking of Rodo and Spice, they spent several hours last night "brainstorming" with Women in Technology. They have since been filling my head with fascinating insights into the psyche of the female gamer (unless it's all disinformation!). Interesting stuff.

I think that's all. I really do.

Hail and farewell,

Gribbly.

Listening to: wind whistling through hollow reeds

Playing: VF3, Crazy Taxi and Chu-Chu Rocket. I am starting to need VF4...

Reading: "Riddley Walker" by Russel Koban. Baffling, yet intriguing.

Watching: "The Beach". And you know what? I liked it! Ah hahahahaaaaaa!

24th March 2000

D'OH! I've done it again...

I tend to get _very_ caught up in what I'm doing when I program, and I totally forget about everything else, like writing dribble, urinating or blinking my eyes. I suddenly realised that my eyes had dried up, my bladder was about to explode, and that I only had half an hour on me to write the dribble.... but at least I've automated the testing procedure for the awareness.

I gotta tell you about this brilliant idea Ola and I have come up with for our own space program... If you build a pyramid out of dirt, 42000m high, it would be so much simpler to get stuff into geosynchronous orbit... all you need to do is to throw the satellite on your back, and walk to the top and drop it... (no of course it won't fall down, stupid!) This is actually quite feasible... all you need to do is to take approximately 2469600000000 tonnes of dirt and put it in one place... seeing as we're about 5 billion people on the earth, we need only to shovel about 5000 tonnes each... spread that out over 50 years, and we're only talking about 250kg a day...(per person mind you) Then there's the issue of where to put the dirt.... since it has to be on the equator, I'd put my vote on South America. (Ola insists on Kilimanjaro)

Well.. this is only one of the brilliant ideas we have for our space program... We're also planning on sending LEGOs robots to Mars, but I suppose we have to start by making them explore the office first.. Long live 'Hank the bumper tank'! Oh, well... let's have a look at what's been happening here at Auran... As I've already mentioned, I've just been automating the testing procedure for the awareness with the help of Roy. We're trying to avoid what happened last week, when the awareness decided to stop working just before the build went through... it sort of screwed all the AI up, which is bad. (Try making a decision covering you eyes and ears, while at the same time have your arms tied behind you back, and you can start to imagine what the poor agents were faced with) I've also been working on the lower level of behaviour (or instinct) for units together with Gribbly. Ola kept working on the military AI this week, and will probably be doing so for some weeks. Phoenix has been worrying hard on the combat system, while Bandit has forced the poor peasants to build until they drop.

Cool... I just strolled through the artist section and forced them all to show me what they'd been doing this week... I'm quite impressed actually... I had a look at some new units, a gipsy version of Lara Croft... new terrain stuff, more units and a secret project... Anyway... my time is up... I have to give this to Webspice now...sorry! (or maybe you're happy I don't dribble more!)

-The Mighty Swede

Reading: A bunch of research papers

Playing: stupid (I'm really a brilliant mind in disguise)

Waiting for: Jaques Costeau, and a comfy chair

Sitting on: a chair with very low comfyness

31st March 2000

BZZT* *AANRK* *CHARLES IN CHARGE* *BZZT

I don't know whether it's the fact that we are a week out from NME (New Millenium Demo - for those of you who are just tuning in), or if it's because we're getting close to April Fools day, but people around the Auran offices are going crazy. It's true! And I have a week full of humorous examples!

Monday: As usual, I was busy working, nay, **slaving** away at the NME Scenario when I heard this gem of wisdom from our own Cult Sandal Designer, Gribbly. This was while he was talking to the Mighty Swede about partners. Or at least I think it was the Mighty Swede...It's been a long week. Anyway, the five sentences that caught my ear went something like this:

Gribbly: "You know what you've got to do?"

MS: "What?"

Gribbly: "You've got to plump them up first"

MS: "Plump them up?"

Gribbly: "Yep, then you can eat them!"

Now, I'm not sure about Queensland, but I'm pretty sure in the rest of Australia it is illegal to eat your partner after force-feeding them. And even if it wasn't, I don't think that the consumption of said partner would exactly result in marital bliss.

Tuesday: I fell asleep on the couch in front of the TV. When I woke up the first time, I could have sworn that the song "Hit me with your Rethem stick" was being played on the late news. I flicked the TV over to [V], where I heard the song "I'm missing you like Kandy". This was the point when I realised I was going crazy.

Wednesday: This day shall be known in history as the day when the greatest travesty in human history occurred. That's right: McDonalds removed the Double Quarter Pounder from their menu. AGAIN! Why! Why! Why! And to replace it with what: The Fillet o' Fish with tomato? Why don't you just rub it in a bit more, McDonalds. Shame.

Thursday: We lost power for an hour. That hour was around lunch. No power = No Dreamcast. No Dreamcast make us go crazy. But that didn't stop us from sitting down around the Dreamcast pretending to play. We also found out that the first thing Flex would build if he was trapped on an island would be a sofa.

Friday: Gribbly put his spare change on top of the food machine. Along with a note saying "Free Money: Please Use". I think that speaks for itself.

Richie also qualifies as crazy after this message I received just 10 minutes ago:

"Don't get be started on what I would do to the game designer of Hårn: Bloodline if it gets released as a shoddy product. Suffice to say it involves rubber bands and lots and lots of Vaseline...."

If we didn't have enough incentive to create the greatest game of all time before, we sure do now :)

Anyway, I'm guessing you want to find out about what's been happening with Hårn: Bloodline. Well we are now a week away from showing off the NME demo - internally that is. And boy, is the game looking sweet! The new terrain system looks jaw-dropping thanks to the efforts of Flex and Ben. c-lynn has been slaving away at shrubs and plants, while Gutter has been making the first easter egg of the game. Lets just say it involves a tattoo, two colours, and a worm.

Other people have been doing other Hårn: Bloodline things as well. But I can't talk about them. Something about the war.

In sadder news, lunch-demon Elisha is leaving us sometime next week to pursue her childhood dream of world domination. We wish her all the best, and hope that she brings lunch a little bit earlier than usual today. Mainly because I am hungry.

From Human Instrumentality Project Vat 3, this has been...

sprayNwipe
====_==_==_

Playing: Dead or Alive 2! Now if only Auran would buy a copy for lunchtime use...
Watching: Stuff
Don't Forget: Not to fill up your car from April 6 - 8! We'll show those fuel nazis!

Oh, New Staff Member alert: Richard Garriot of Ultima fame is coming to work at Auran! Steph will be putting up a press release tomorrow, April 1, at just before midday ;p

7th April 2000

Dribble the 7th, April of Friday.

Scene : INT. FLEX MENTALLO'S HEAD

(The emptiness is vast, punctuated by the odd distant tinkle of the proverbial coin dropping)

Flex : (internal monologue) What does it all mean?

After a solid 1/2 hour of sleep and 7 or 8 hours of insomnia/sickness-induced restlessness the night before, naturally I was well prepared to crank into the last few days before our NME demo presentation. And now I must sally forth into the fair and evergreen lands of Dribble. To quote Barney...'IIIIITTTT BEGINS!'

We have been a busy (and naturally merry) band of outlaws...errr...developers of late, putting the finishing touches on the Hårn: Bloodline NME. This has involved the burning of many midnight oils, particularly by the Jet programmers, getting everything

-

- a) working
- b) spit shined

All sorts of little bits of polish, as well as lots of bug fixes, have been going into Hårn: Bloodline, and it's now pretty damn stable, visually detailed and runs pretty nicely across a variety of machines. Naturally it looks a whole lot nicer on a p3-550 with GeForce than it does on a p2-266 with a TNT, but it runs at good frame rates across a wide spectrum of setups.

The owls are not what they seem!

So what's actually been doing who to what thusly going into Hårn: Bloodline of late? Well, I'm not exactly sure since I've been busy with my stuff, so I'll make some wild guesses based on features going into the builds!

AI - sweeeet AI. Young master Handsome has been smacking down the AI booty, with everpresent-sandle-wearing-Sega-loving-AkiraInVFPimping-designer-o'Hårn: Bloodline Gribbly watching over his shoulder.

WATCH the Rethemi patrol about the map!
SEE Rethemi attack the person of the innocent and peace loving Kandians!
MARVEL at peasants going about their business!

Phoenix and Bandit have been doing all sorts of Hårn: Bloodline stuff, and I'll abstain from commenting on what they are doing in the hope of not offending them by making unsubstantiated claims such as saying that they are writing the 'Hello World' component of the game. They've been poking their fingers into many areas of the Hårn: Bloodline pie, this much is known. Combat, construction, resource collection, yep all that sort of shtuff!

Coop, right now you remind me of a small Mexican chihuahua!

Over on Jet, well they always seem busy on things both technical and strange.

I know CJ has been working hard on the movement and pathfinding, a not-particularly-easy task, and Ben has been doing all sorts of terrain stuff, which is looking, to quote FBI agent Dale Cooper, 'DAMN fine!'. Pete/Rock has been putting lots of visual goodies in, as well as getting the Strategic Overview in shape. Not sure what Mighty Swede is up to, apart from not writing Dribble this week. Cookie and Craig, well they're organising, coding, steering the mighty wildebeest that is Jet/Hårn: Bloodline, y'know the usual things.

How would you like that coffee, Agent Cooper?
Black as midnight on a moonless night!
Pretttty black!

Over here on the art side, Ms. Shenava 2000 has been working on characters, in particular their skeletons, Gutter has been doing buildings and sorting all sorts of technical stuff with Pete and Cookie. c.lynn has been doing environment, building menu images and demolishing her computer in a hail of blue screens and corrupt NT installs... I've mainly been doing terrains, for which I thankfully have a render box now...those 6hrs of constant hard disk swapping made it very difficult to do anything else whilst rendering. I've also been touching up the interface as well...

He's flown the coop, Coop!

In the design room, well all sorts of things go on in there...

Gribbly + sprayNwipe = strange rituals involving butter, weird operating systems and casio keyboard elevator muzak.

Gribs had his significant other in playtesting the game before, and stayed late last night tweaking the villages and objects on the map. sprayNwipe is constantly messing with config files and setting up this and that, generally spreading his icy tendrils through SourceSafe...

How's Annie? How's Annie?

And now a busy weekend lies ahead, as we have a mad rush to the NME.

Look out for the Dribble Postmortem of the Hårn: Bloodline NME. Gourmet Meal or Chopped Liver, you be the judge?!?

Or to quote the Bloodhound Gang, from the Ballad of Chasey Lain...

'P.S. Mom and Dad this is Chasey, Chasey this is my mom and dad, Now show 'em them t...'

Wait! I can't say that in Dribble...

Hmmn maybe I should just end there.

Just trying to be...

flex mentallo

Reading : Magician

Watching Last Week : all of Twin Peaks,

Watching This Week : Brisbane International Animation Festival with Ray Harryhausen - woot!

Listening to : rude tunes...

Playing : VF, GT2, and Final Fantasy Tactics, having just finished Goldeneye...

One month to go to e3, woohoo!

14th April 2000

Hooboy and what a week it's been!

Last Tuesday was "The Big Demo" that you may read about in previous (markedly inferior) Dribbles. The whole team put a hell of a lot of time and effort into making Hårn: Bloodline look and play better than ever -- and the results were very impressive. One of the best things about working in this industry are those moments where everything comes together. It's a real George Peppard in the A-Team moment, as all the planning and hardwork, all the disparate elements that everyone has been working on for months (or years!) are melded together as a coherent whole.

Of course, sometimes the pieces just refuse to fit, and there's much head scratching and muttering. Other times -- and happily the recent demo was one of these times -- everything fits neatly, and the whole is suddenly much more than the sum of its parts.

Imagine a beautiful oil painting of a landscape -- majestic hills, beautiful sky, charming buildings peppered about the place, handsome folk attending to their wholesome duties. Now imagine grabbing that painting and moving around inside it with complete freedom. Want to check out an interesting rock formation? Go take a look. Want to check out that alluring peasant girl or hunky peasant guy? Go check 'em out! This is the best verbal description I can give you of Hårn: Bloodline's visual splendour. All credit to the team, particularly Jet Team Wrangler and Heroic Overtime Accumulator Cookie, for their incredible work. They -- the programmers and artists -- have produced what is without a doubt the sweetest looking game environment I've ever seen on the PC. And I've seen a lot of game environments =P

But it wasn't all looks. Swedish AI gurus Mighty Swede and Handsome have been working hard to put brains behind the beauty. The Rethem bad guys are now something of a challenge, often niftily pretending that there's been an AI bug before swiftly moving in to crush you (this actually happened during the demo... I thought the AI had gone castors up, so I quickly moved on to something else. Meanwhile, they came and kicked my butt!). Phoenix and Bandit have made it possible for the player to interact with the game in numerous different ways -- particularly cool is the combat system, now featuring blood-curdlingly realistic melee combat with a variety of nasty weapons.

Chrispy -- sound chap of goodness -- was finally able to get some of his handiwork into the game. His "just above the pain threshold" crickets were a particular favourite of the whole team. Of course, he managed to perfect the footstep sounds about two days after the demo =P

I'm sure I'm missing everyone... Gutters new buildings -- while about eighteen times too large -- look fantastic, and Miss Shenava 2000's units are most alluring. c.lynn contributed some beautiful trees and rocks, and an uncannily well rendered cart. C'est tres bon! Flex Mentallo, in his inimitable style, produced an incredible terrain texture under very difficult circumstances -- yet didn't even break a sweat! Amazing. Shame he sucks at VF.

I've left people out (including myself! Hey...) but the reality is that everyone did their bit to make the demo a complete success. Yay team!

Now, you're probably thinking "that's great gribbly, you just pat yourselves on the back interminably, and we'll just imagine the game will we?". Well, hold up their O Dribble recipient. For you have my word that there will be screenshots... soon :) I'm not giving you a date, but there will be screenshots.

Now, I'm off to spend a weekend in the forest with a Tibetan Lama. Don't ask.

Yours spiritually,

Gribbly.

Listening to: the music of the spheres...

Watching: Northern Exposure re-runs, and too many documentaries on marine biology.

Reading: an Encyclopaedia of Anatomy and Physiology. The liver rules!

Playing: VF3. Sorry to be so predictable...

20th April 2000

The irony of life... and death for that part

For some reasons I find it hard to believe in evolution theory. There's too much irony in life, that there has to have been someone that put everything together, and is now laughing his head off looking at the weird little critters, called humans, desperately trying to find a meaning to every aspect of life.

In 1991 Jerison presented his theory that human language stems from a need for better cognitive maps of the territory. He explains - 'While members belonging to the family Canidae (dogs, wolves etc.) rely heavily on scent marking and their olfactory system (sense of smell), the early Hominidae (that's us and our ancestors if you trust evolution theory) did not have a well enough developed olfactory system to map out the world in this way, so they substituted vocal sounds for scent marking.' -- isn't this just a wonderful theory.. the fact that we can recite Shakespeare and read poetry is because our noses are so inadequate that our forfathers could never find their way back to that oak tree they peed on..

Aaaaanyway.... Today's the last day before our easter break here at Auran, and It's also the day when we decide on the winner of our internal 'Hårn: Bloodline screenshot competition'. The lucky employee that's captured the best screenshot

of Hårn: Bloodline (no touching up) can collect a \$200 easter bonus..we are likely to release the screenshot(s) at some stage, so keep an eye open for it in future dribbles (...and I still don't understand why _I_ got disqualified... I'm tellin' ya.. I just turned the game on..and there he was... Homer Simpson!)

I think we've all had a well earned week of 'relaxed work', after last week's big demo.. We started the week with a design forum, where everyone got a chance to say what they felt was good and bad with Hårn: Bloodline. I think a lot of good ideas were hatched (actually Gribbly was buried in a pile of design ideas scribbled on napkins etc.), and we're going to meet again today to summarize it before it's time for drinks and snacks.

A bunch of the programmers... well.. at least me and Handsome (Handsome... yeah...it's like if I would use the nick 'Slim', 'Mr. Fitness' or 'Sporty' :)) went back to the drawing board to reiterate some of the design, and plan for the next milestone... It's always nice when you've got time to take a step back and have a look at the system. Gribbly must have been the most stressed guy of everyone this week... being designer dude and all..having to listen to all the weird staff going on about their even more weird design ideas... sprayNwipe finally realized that he could survive no more of Gribbly's musical eruptions and moved out of their shared office, into the open area.

Artists... hmm...ah.. those guys with brushes and white pants that have been painting the walls around here? Noo..that's right those guys are called painters... well I've seen a couple of arty looking characters trying to squeeze A3 paintings into a A4 scanner...And I've seen Flex turning his screenshot into a high quality Budweiser commercial (Wuuzzuuuuup!!) He's sort of an artist isn't he? (He got disqualified as well... unfair!) Ah well... I won't make you read any more of this garbage...

over and out!

- The Mighty Swede

Reading: Novel no. 26 (or something like that) in the DiscWorld series..

Quoting: Marquis de Sade. I've got no idea what he ever said...but this way I can say nasty things without people getting upset.... 'Working late tonight? Well... like Marquis de Sade once said - 'Blow me!'

Eating: Satay chicken pizza.... *yum*

Drinking: Anything but beer.... uuurk!

27th April 2000

????? *forgotten to dribble ?*

5th May 2000

Look out! It's SuperDribble!

We're back from Easter break, filled with chocolate. Of course, with every holiday comes the day or so after where you have to wade through e-mail and newsgroups to catch up with what's happening. But there's chocolate.

Boy, did that make no sense!
Aaaaaaaanyway...

The main highlight before we went on our Easter break of Good was the Screenshot competition. Basically, a challenge was sent out to the staff of Auran - Take the best Hårn: Bloodline screenshot, get \$200. As you can probably guess, everybody at Auran was all over it like Blahnana at a goat show.

After a long and furious voting session, the winners were decided:

3rd place went to da Fish, with his shot entitled "Guy standing in front of Barracks". As a reward, da Fish was given a medium sized egg.

2nd place was given to someone who rules at VF3 - me! My shot "Parsyth on a rampage", involves the Lord of my Hårn: Bloodline village just after he lopped off the head of a lowly Medium Foot. Hil-arious. For my troubles, I was given the Biggest Easter Egg Of All Time(tm) - a 1kg chocolate egg. And no, I haven't finished it yet.

The Grand Prize went to Mephistu, for his shot "Guy standing on big hill". Congratulations Mephistu! Besides getting the \$200, you also get your shot in the Dribble! and here it is!



Of course, there are always some who go a bit wacky. The Mighty Swede decided to put an anonymous Simpson's character in the screenshot, while Flex "I'm a pimp going to E3" Mentallo managed to produce a screenshot of the Hårn: Bloodline community shouting "WASSUP!" at each other while suffering a Chu Chu Rocket hallucination. Besides being ridiculed for not getting the \$200, they were also given some eggs.

Probably the most exiting thing that has happened in the last 24 hours is the fact that the Hårn: Bloodline teams pleas and cries for a Playstation 2 have finally been granted.

Anyway, maybe if I talk about what the Hårn: Bloodline team has been doing they'll stop beating me with a burlap sack.

- Bandit, besides consuming more coffee than the guy out of Flying High, has been working on something called the Logistics Agent.
- Flex Mentallo has been hanging out with Pac-man, Falco, and Chasey Lain. In his spare time, he's been working on concept art, as well as some of the Rethemi buildings. And he also has been gloating about going to E3.
- Gutter has been working on various River stuff. He also doesn't play VF3 anymore, since we all kept whipping his ass at it.
- Phoenix has been raving about Thief II. A lot. He's also been working on the Conversation Systems in Hårn: Bloodline, so that peasants can chat about how bad the weather is.
- Gribbly has been drooling over VF4. Besides that, he has also been designing one of the biggest shifts in Hårn: Bloodline gameplay. My lips are sealed, but no doubt you'll hear something soon...

Because my name isn't Gerald Shaw,

sprayNwipe

==_==_==_==_

Waiting: For my Optus@Home install. Only 5 more sleeps to go!

Visiting: PlanetCrap (www.planetcrap.com).

Playing: Multiplayer Worms: Armageddon! I never knew it could be *this* addictive.

Hating: Communicator 4.72 under Linux. Eww, memory leaks everywhere!

Anticipated E3 Titles: Monkey Island 4, Virtua Fighter 4, Quake 3:Team Arena, and of course any Dolphin news (although I have a sinking feeling we'll have to wait until TGS)

12th May 2000

Memo to Self:

Next time, write Dribble _before_ meeting in which workload is doubled :-/

Yes it's the world's most stressed game designer, Gribbly, taking a few moments to dribble at ya. Stressed? Well, yeah. Besides having rather a lot to do on Hårn: Bloodline (a result of the recent "Design Forum" in which it was decided that some parts of the design needed to change), I've also been organizing my wedding! That's right, it's wedding bells for Gribbly and... er... Mrs. Gribbly (something like Ms. Pacman =P). So free time isn't my long suit right now. May 27th is the big day folks, if you want to pray for rain or otherwise.

Aaaaaaaanyway, the team has been as busy cooking up gaming goodness as ever. Cookie has been prototyping his pet camera control idea, and so far it's looking mighty fine. I ain't giving _anything_ away about this. Phoenix had the misfortune to be assigned my patented "Stupid Conversation System", and I've had a lot of fun telling him "no, not stupid enough!" every time he tries to make it more sensible. He's now working on making the little chaps get tired when they run around too much. Bandit has been making repeated screaming noises as he upgrades the animation editor to handle sound. Mighty Swede and Handsome have been pretending to work on the AI (they are, in fact, hatching a complex plot to make Swedish the official language of Sydney 2000 Olympics). We welcome three new team members this week -- the ineffable Grig, the inscrutable Kozak and the incomparable DK. They've been taking a look at multiplayer issues and various other technicalities that my low wattage game-designer brain can't grok (that's a Ukranian word... it translates as "comprehend without vigorous beatings").

Gutter has been working his art-magic along with Miss Shenava 2000 and c.lynn. Beautiful images abound in the new "art den" in the corner, where piles of Hårn: Bloodline concept art is displayed. We'll have to see about getting some of this stuff online soon... (don't pester me about it, though... you know the helpdesk email address right? =P). Surrogate lead art-pimp Flex is sunning himself at Hoote^H^H E3, getting "up to speed" on the latest games. No word on VF4 so far, but hope springs eternal. C'mon Sega, don't let me down! And oh-boy doesn't MGS2 look just a little but exciting? Damn but Hideo Kojima is insane! But Yu Suzuki could take him any day in a old fashioned bar-room brawl (do they have old fahioned bar-room brawls in Japan? You'd think they'd have ultra-modern bar room brawls... sort of miniaturized high tech brawls with nonsensical slogans -- "How to Modern? When BarFighting!").

Now you know why they call it "dribble".

That's enough from me, Mr. Stress, this week.

Over and out.

Gribbly.

Watching: Topsy Turvy (latest Mike Leigh... brilliant as usual) and disaster shows on Discovery Channel.

Listening to: Jay-Z, Life and Times of Shawn Carter.

Reading: The little newsletter that comes in Hubbards cereal boxes.

Playing: Rayman 2 on the DC. More precisely, wishing I had time to play =P

19th May 2000

Dribble Redux, Infinite Recursions to the Power of Dribble

Oh it's time to write another Dribble is it?

I see, I see. Well I'd better get on with it I suppose.

What's been going on around here this week? Well I don't know, since I was at e3!!!!

E3 I tell you!!! Moooohahahhahaha!!!

Ahem.

Anyways...

Let me see if I can find out what's been going on...

Gribbly has been sequestered away in his office nailing some recent changes in the path Hårn: Bloodline is taking, trying to balance the genre elements a bit better as we head towards our next internal demo in 2 months or so, lovingly known as Epoch around here.

Cookie had a nice new camera system prototyped that works quite nicely, and suits the squad/party based gameplay elements very nicely indeed. The camera controls are a real bitch in any 3d game, as many developers will attest to, but we think we're on to a reasonable system here...we also have standard RTS controls too...how the two camera systems work together, well, you'll just have to wait and see.

Benji has been doing some stuff with rivers and lakes apparently, and I think CJ is still cranking on the movement system. Mighty Swede and Handsome are still at work on AI I believe, Handsome had something called an editor up on his screen before, it has something or other to do with AI. I think Pete's revisiting the DirectX support. All the other programmers have been, well, programming stuff, I think. I'm not asking them, programmers are scary!!!

The art team has been up to all sorts of shenanigans whilst I was away, c.lynn and Miss Shenava have been cranking out the sketches for our art design, and the big art wall of sweet sweetness has started filling with our labours. It contains a plethora of concept art for all to come and gawk at and complain about. More plethoras of art will be appearing in the coming weeks...and in turn those masses of sketches will magically be transformed into ingame models by the art team. Gutter, tech artiste extraordinaire, has been fooling around with all sorts of special effects, recently he's had some good results in building big ass dense forests that don't kill the frame rate, and also quasi-volumetric clouds. The forests are looking real, real good, and will hopefully help set us apart from many other 3d games with spartan landscapes...think Black and White with more foliage and you'll be on the right track (and yes this does work and it does run at a nice frame rate 8)).

We've got some new artistes and programmers starting soon, as well as a new netadmin and a new QA chappy, so we'll be charging forth into the Hårn: Bloodline Epoch. If you are wondering why we have lots of dumb names and acronyms for everything, well its become an Auran tradition ever since the great Hårn: Bloodline naming riots of '98...and if tradition isn't a good enough reason blame Gribbly, its all his fault and I think he's cracking under the stress of designing a game and organising a wedding at the same time.

Special Dribble Addendum : Flex's E3 Extravaganza!!!!

Everyone loves to hear about how much fun someone else had whilst away overseas on hols, so how could I fail to include an E3 report. Whilst I had to brave the crap exchange rate and recent spate of QANTAS mishaps, I managed to survive all this...and arrive in LA. Props to ex-Dark Reignie Shlimer for letting me sleep on his floor and props to supermarket chain Ralphs for selling Japanese beer at very reasonable prices. Props to Hooters and Alabamie girl for keeping me and fellow traveller b2 distracted and full of greasy food for a few hours one morning...

E3 was big and noisy, and there was much goodness to see. Sega romped home with the best line up of the show, Jet Set Radio, Grandia 2 and Eternal Arcadia being the standouts for me (since I already own Space Channel 5 and Shenmue I wasn't as fussed about seeing them, but they had a great showing). Buy a Dreamcast people, you will not regret it! On PS2, at Sony's somewhat sedate stand, the Metal Gear Solid 2 movie and GT2000 were the standouts of the show. The big N were demoing some great Rare games and the new Zelda, and plenty of Pokemon...it was all up to their usual high standard, I think 2000 is going to be a good year for N64 owners. On the PC standouts were Blizzard, with WC3 looking really, really nice (and being very playable too) and, strangely Microsoft, with games like Dungeon Siege, Crimson Skies, the latest AOK update and more. Black and White was looking good, with the Molyneux-meister pimping the game to his hearts content.

Oh and there were plenty of booth-babes (and midgets at the GOD lot), but I was too distracted by games to look at 'em. Honestly!

Check out the e3 photos, you crazy kids!



Ahh the hard and difficult life of the booth babe! Oh what a piece of work is man, how noble in reason, how infinite in faculty, how expansive in silicon...

I think I can sum up the week with the Hooter's motto...

'Delightfully tacky, yet unrefined'

Anyways, that's all for this week!

Just trying to be,
Flex Mentallo

Listening to : new eminem stuff from Gribbly

Reading : Not a lot at the moment, since I finished Raymond E. Feist's Riftwar books for the umpteenth time on the plane

Watching : Battlefield Earth, what a funny and dumbass movie - woohoo gotta love those scientologists!

Playing : RE:Code Veronica and NFL2K and Crazy Taxi on Dreamcast

Not playing : TTT or RRV on the PS2...blech!

Impressed to : find Sigmund the Sea Monster and ElektroWoman (no DynaGirl though) and Cling'n'Clang and HR

Pufnstuff action figures in the US...

Befuddled by : Poo-chi the electronic Sega dog

Taken back to childhood by : Cool Speed Racer Mach V with Chim Chim and Spritle figures...VROOM VROOM!

Here he comes, here comes Speed Racer, he's a demon on wheels

26th May 2000

"C is for cookies..."

Hi kids!

It's The Mighty Swede again. This time I'll try to educate you, the readers, by bringing you an alphabet song... If anyone of you can successfully sing it to the melody of "I rule the ruins" by the 80's German speed metal band Warlock, I'll send you a prize in the mail..

But before that,

If you're one of the lucky ones that read last weeks dribble, you read about Flex's adventures at E3, looked at pretty pictures of booth babes.. well.. I'm going to a conference as well.. The annual AAAI (American Association for Artificial Intelligence) conference, this year in Austin Texas. I've got a vague feeling there won't be any booth babes to take pictures of (unless Stuart Russell is really desperate about promoting his book, and will slip into a blue latex dress... well, I probably wouldn't take any pictures of it anyway..eech!)

Ehh.. as I was saying.. I'm really excited about going, and hopefully I'll get a lot out of it...I'll make sure to bring you a full report from it. Boring? Oh yeah.. well you can't stop me!

I'm hoping to meet a bunch of game programmers there. We've got a lot to learn from the more academic guys.. and conversely they've got a lot to learn from us, we're the ones that actually implement and use all the theories that they've put so much time into.

Ok, so here's what everyone's been up to this week in alphabetical order... come on boys and girls, let's sing it!! C is for cookies...

Ashley has been working on a tool for debugging the AI system and it's looking good, it might just turn out to be the most useful thing since the invention of vending machines.

Blahnana has been up to no good as usual, except for showing Steve (see N for more details) around.

Cookie has been working on the new camera system as well as guiding confused programmers.

David (aka Gutter) has written a technical art doc of some type, but more importantly done a prototype of forests.. it really blew me away, it looked sweeeet!

Everyone will have a few drinks today since it's the last Friday of the month.

Fiona (aka Miss Shenava) has been doing more concept art of creatures, I especially liked the Aklash, very charming.

Gribbly has been having a much better time than the rest of us! (honeymoon)

Handsome was supposed to work on the AI editor, but has been helping Phoenix.

Ingenious construction workers have been cutting the power off to the office regularly.

Japanese delivery boy has been working his Ar*e off.

Kazys has been working on the cinematic system with a helping hand from Handsome.

Leanne has been binding photocopied AI books for me faster than I could say arachnophobia.

Memphistu turned up late today, so I couldn't ask him what he's been up to.

Newly recruited sysadmin Steve has been settling in this week.

Onyx and Orion two of our servers has certainly been busy.

Pete has waged battle on DirectX.

QA guru Roy quite liked the idea of collective punishment when the build fails... "drop and give me 100, on the knuckles!"

Rachael has been doing research on the same super secret as SprayNWipe is working on. She's also been working on the new Auran Jet site. I'm sure you'll hear more about it soon.

Steph has been producing promotional material for Auran Jet. The drafts I had a look at seemed very nice.. more news to come.

Teadale (aka SprayNWipe) has been working on a new super secret design. He also told me his cat needs chemotherapy!

Ukrainian guys, have spent this week working on the network system and listening to some weird pop music (Ukrainian I assume)..

Voluptuous artist and designer Flex is holding the fort as Gribbly is on his honeymoon.

Wish I could think of anyone starting with w.

Xeroxing is really fun, but painful!



Yours truly, has been prototyping a spanking new piece of technology for Auran Jet.

Zilly french girl Celine (aka c.lynn), has basically just been smoking cigarettes and surfing the internet (ok.. ok.. she's been doing some concept art for buildings as well).

Well.. I suppose that would be all for this time..

Over and out

-The Mighty Swede

Listening to: Ukrainian pop (not deliberately)

Waiting for: AAAI 2000

Reading: Obscure AI-papers I copied from the QUT library

Still aching: My nose... try squeezing your head into the photocopier

2nd June 2000

Hey Hey, All!

I'm actually writing this on thursday, since I have a one-day holiday tomorrow. Yes, one day, where I can just drive around like a madman doing exciting stuff like paying bills and taking my cat Chester to university for yet more X-Rays and operations. I swear, if I didn't already spend all my money on games, that cat would bankrupt me.

The only thing on my mind right now is the fact that Brisbane has suddenly decided to steal Canberra weather, so that the highest temperature all this week has been 18C. For those of you living anywhere below Queensland, this is no problem, because you're prepared for such weather with sweatshirts and jackets. However, most of the Queenslanders up here aren't prepared for any of this, so the end result is a whole bunch of people wearing hawaiian shirts and boardies looking very cold. I'd laugh at them, but all of my old clothes that I wore in Sydney don't seem to fit me anymore - curse you FFF Noodles!. Besides, they're still coming to grips that their State of Origin team is inferior to the mighty BLUES!!!!!!!!!!

Aha! Since I'm not here, they can't beat me like they usually do when I pay out on the bad football teams up here! Take THAT, Steindecker!

On to the weekly Hårn: Bloodline news!

- Pete has been working on getting the brand-spanking new DirectX 7 renderer working, as well as polishing some of the Terrain code.
- CJ and Ash have been working at two ends of the Squadron system. Trust me, a whole bunch of you are going to have fun with this when it's finished.
- Mighty Swede and Ola have been doing the usual AI stuff, tossing around terms like "planned agents" and "where's lunch" like nobody's business
- Phoenix has been writing the cinematic engine to be used in the game. Like the squad stuff, the cinematic engine is going to kick ass!
- Flex Mentallo, Keeper of the Design has been ... well... keeping the design warm.
- The rest of the artists have been putting pieces of string up on a wall next to me, and hanging pictures off them.
- And me? Well, I just finished the Design Overview for the secret project that no-one knows about yet.

Hopefully we'll be able to release some stuff soon - I don't think any of you have any idea about what type of game it is ;p

While I'm here, a big congratulations goes out to our favourite sandal-wearing designer Gribbly, who managed to get tricked into marriage on Saturday. Phoenix, still bitter from the "Did you hear Phoenix got married? Nah, you must be thinking of Phoenix" jokes from mid-last year, has added a nice little surprise to the Hårn: Bloodline conversation engine for Gribbly when he gets back. Lets just say it involves rehashing the same joke and a whole bunch of bored peasants.

My hands are now completely frozen. I have to go. Need Heater.

sprayNwipe
====_==_==_

Watching: Medical Detectives! It's very addictive! (11pm-midnight Saturday on Discovery Channel). Yes, I realise what that is saying about my social life.

Mourning: The passing of Looking Glass Studios, who made some of the most engrossing and awe-inspiring games out there (System Shock, Thief, Terra Nova, Flight Unlimited).

Thing of the Week: Cryptosporidium. Go look it up (that is, if I have spelt it correctly)

9th June 2000

Why are there so many, songs about rainbows, and what's on the other side?!?

Ahhh, Kermit my friend, if only your happy little green head knew what was on the other side of the Hårn: Bloodline rainbow! Could it be a pot of gold (I'm sure that's what the investors want!)? Could it be (in best Dave Bowman voice)...something wonderful? Could it be a bowl of hot, spicy spaghetti? Could it be the defining moment of the Twenty Zeroes? Only time will tell!

But time will not tell this week, oh no my friends...

This week, well, it can only be called Dribble Gets Weird! Gulp!

We (We, of course being those of us that are making Hårn: Bloodline, NOT We as in Me in the plural) are taking a short vacation from said game this week to whip up a pitch for super-secret proposal #23, also known around the Pentagon, and down at the pub, as 'The Project(tm)'.

This proposal was first encountered by a small team of scientists trekking across the Himalayas in 1924, at the height of the roaring 20s. The leader of this expedition, the Nordic scientist and adventurer Leif Errikson, wrote the details of the proposal on the back of a small tortoise shell before eating a lump of contaminated snow and dying. The band of scientists disappeared in the froze wastes, and Errikson's body was frozen there until just last year.

Meanwhile...

A team of extreme snowboarders headed up to the peak of Everest for the ultimate boarding challenge in August of 1999. Loopy 'Hashboy' Smith led the charge and after falling, errr leaping off a 300m cliff on his board, he found himself with a broken arm and two broken legs sitting in a particularly soft patch of snow. Looking over at the nearby icy wall, he saw a figure frozen into the icy wall, and using only the warmth of his breath he melted the mysterious figure free. His last conscious thought was of pulling a turtle shell from the frozen figure's jacket.

Later...

Loopy awoke back in civilisation, in a hospital bed and in traction. He was, like, totally freaked by the two black suited G-Men at the end of his bed. After the briefest bout of wu-shu fighting in history, the inscribed shell was in the hands of the G-Men, and Loopy was deeper in traction. That was Errikson's diary/tortoise shell, containing...secret proposal #23!

A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away...

After a series of misadventures the contents of proposal #23 ended up at Auran, and the big bwanas decided it was time to act on the contents of this proposal.

SCENE IV - THE PROJECT

INT. AURAN WAREHOUSE OFFICES

In which some things of more sense are put forth...

And that's what we are doing this week. Artists are happy working on 'The Project (tm)' for said undisclosed possible thing of undisclosable nature. Ms. Shenava, C.Lynn and new fellow Artur are all working on characters for 'The Project (tm)', whilst Gutter does Buildings and helps me (Flex-a-rooni) with the map and terrain for 'The Project(tm)'. Some Programmers also work towards 'The Project (tm)', including such luminaries as Cookie, Pete and Bandit. Designer Of The Nanosecond Gribbly stumbles into 'The Project(tm)' after being constantly whipped by my VF3 Pai action since returning from his honeymoon (he's gone soft I'm afraid, married life and all that).

But surely there has been Bloodline stuff going on in here in the past week, before, *dum da dum* 'The Project (tm)'. Well there sure was Virginia!

Swedish musical demon Handsome has been working on the FSM editor, and there were some almost erotically beautiful bezier curve arrows linking those FSM states on the screen. Apparently Pete is to thank for the strange blobby nature of the curves, well done Pete! I think that German speed metal is taking its toll...might be time for Pete to get back to the Swedish motherland and rest in a mound of cold snow (as opposed to warm snow).

Pete of course is Special FX ninja extraordinaire, and has been whipping some issues with the terrain into shape, as well as getting the particle fx going...eye candy a-go-go!

Phoenix has been working on the in-game cinema controls, and has implemented some nice stuff to automate cinema creation somewhat.

CJ has been continuing on with the whole movement, squad, and formation triumvirate that has become his zeitgeist, his raison d'etre, nay, the very core of his working being!

SprayNWipe, Daniel Boone fan that he is, has been doing Thingz on Koolthingz. I think he has also been pulling some Stringz, eating some Chipz, and having more than a few Drinkz.

Everyone else has been doing other stuff.

Oh yeah, our EA-producing compadres Steve 'Steve-o' Dautermann and Derek 'Chopper' Proud were in earlier in the week for all sorts of discussions, proposals and presentations, and naturally to make sure that we weren't frivolously wasting EA's extensive supplies of hard currency. I think they left happy!

We might as well whack a link to the brand-spanking new, full of content about AURAN Jet www.auranjet.com in here, shameless self-promoting being the order of the day for unscrupulous hacks such as myself!

Hmmn there's weird quasi-porn coming through my headphones from the latest Eminem album. Strange!

Time to wrap up methinks!

Back to the baseline normality of Dribble next week, where stuff we are doing is more mentionable than this weeks undisclosable, secretive, strange and mysterious Project(tm).

Listening to : Eminem - Intercoursin' Crazy

Reading : Ring by Stephen Baxter

Watching : Dragonball Z

Singing : in the Rain

Walking : the Earth and getting into adventures and shit...

Wondering : about Gary Coleman pimping online gaming at e3

Feels some strange hip-hop (or maybe its hippy) spirit inhabiting...

Peace.

Just trying to be...

16th June 2000

yelp!

Um... Er... yeah. *covers microphone with hand* Look, I don't think I can do this today... what? I have to? Gah!

Gribbly here with the latest Dribble-installment. And let me say this up front -- Dribbling is a really tough call this week since everyone is working on the ever-so-secret Project(tm) that Flex so eloquently didn't tell you about last week.

momentary Pause as CyberSpice rings me up to yell at me

Sh*t sorry... um... well, here's what I _can_ say:

I, Gribbly, have been working closely with some EA folk on certain aspects of a certain game that may or may not be Hårn:Bloodline. It's going very well, and I think the results will be pretty dang cool.

Flex and his team of elite art-pimps have been pixel pushing like never before preparing art for The Project(tm) which is looking better and better all the time.

Cookie and his team of ninja coders have been code creating like there's no tomorrow, also in the service of The Project(tm).

Cripes. This sucks doesn't it? I'm sorry -- I simply am not allowed to tell you anything about what's going on :)

I _can_ tell you that Virtua Fighter 3 still reigns supreme as the lunchtime game of choice. It warms my shrivelled little game-designer heart to see the much-loved and continually used Dreamcast have such status in our game playing. You go, girl.

Quake3 remains the post work fix for most of the development team. We're back onto straight DM after a long stint of CTF thanks to Gutterland (see PlanetQuake). Q3DM19 is our current map, and if I see the message "Gribbly was in the wrong place" one more time I'm gonna lose it.

Flex has been smug all day since the nature of his work on The Project (tm) demands computing power an order of magnitude beyond what his current computer (which is roughly the same as everybody's) can deliver. He has therefore been bumped to the top of the queue for the much sought-after New Computer. There should be a rule against gloating about such things.

Hmmm I'm really stretching here aren't I? I might stop before I start writing poetry. We'll have news for you soon, and that's a promise.

grib.

Reading: "Hothouse" by Brian Aldiss (classic sci-fi courtesy of Jamamoto)

Playing: Soul Calibur at QGL lan, and ruling the cosmos. Also Q3A at QGL lan, and getting thoroughly schooled by b2 :)

Watching: Nothing.

Visiting: <http://www.do-not-zzz.com/>

Listening to: Eminem and FSOL

23rd June 2000

The Mighty Home, 00.07am Sunday

Phew... that's what I call exhausting... I just watered the flowers in the _whole_ apartment.

Yes, it's true! The Mighty Swede is sort of a bachelor again... well.. almost.. my wife is back home in Sweden for a while. It's a new experience, its an exhausting experience.. I know that at some stage I have to figure out how the washing machine works.. She's been away for 3 weeks now, and I'm starting to run out of clean clothes.. luckily I dodged the problem for another week by simply going in to the city an buying some new clothes. I've also got a strategy for doing the dishes.. or rather a strategy for not doing the dishes... I know it's a longshot, but I'm willing to risk it... I reckon that if I just ignore the dishing for long enough, the bacteria and fungi living on the plates, will evolve into a sophisticated society, increasing the living standard and technology in 'plate-world'.

I'm sure that during the first few weeks their scientists will argue that the world is spherical and the plate rotates in an elliptical path around the kitchen light... but they will soon realize the bitter truth when the members of their first round-the-plate-expedition fall off the edge of the world. Well... eventually they will develop cruise missiles with detergent warheads... after a few weeks of 'cold war', some maniac fungi-general will push the button.. within seconds the bacteria will have replied with a shower of missiles and kaboom! All my problems are gone! Clever!

Auran office, 04.27am Tuesday

Yaaawn

Good morning Bratislava... This is the Mighty Swede calling from Brisbane with the votes of the Australian jury.. eeh..

I just figured I'd take this excellent opportunity to give you all a bit of an insight into the joyful life of a game developer. It is now 04.27 in the morning, and I'm still here happily coding away at the Auran premises. What might* be passing through the head of this hardy programmer as he sits there listening to the melancholic music from 'the project', trying to tweak some of the particle effects he's been working on lately... well, let's have a quick peek....

.....zzzzZZZ

oh! what? I didn't do it! Oh.. well, there's actually not much in there at all... working through the night usually makes your brain go numb from all those energy drinks and coffees...

So why would one want to sit up all night working? Well.. that's a good question... I'm not sure why actually, but I'm thinking it might* have something to do with the fact that we're showing a demo of 'the project' tomorrow to some very prominent people...

Oh.. and I'm not alone... Rock, Cookie and Craig are still here at work. Gutter and Flex kept the rep up for the artist by staying back until 3am... not bad for those charcoal-stick wielding weirdos actually..

Well, I think I'll do a three pass dribble this week, b'cause hopefully I can tell you a little about how the demo went if I write the rest a little later... ok, over and out for now!

Auran office, 12.26pm Thursday

The demo which I unfortunately still can't tell you much about was specifically done for Electronic Arts. We were given a week to whack the thing together, and I think the demo went pretty damn good... all parties was pleased with the result. As Larry Probst (chairman of the board for Electronic Arts) walked past my desk, I overheard him turning to Steve "Steve-o" Dauterman (GM of EA Studio Oz) saying "That's darn good for five days!"

I think that mandates a big mother of a pat on our own backs... Good work Mighty Swede! Good work boyz and girlz at Auran!

Needless to say, most people here at Auran have been working hard towards the demo, and I'm sure we'll all experience a little loss of momentum as always after a big demo. We'll soon get up to speed again though.. we're going to be very busy with the upcoming Auran Jet release.

So what have people here at Auran been up this week... well... after a brief investigation I've come up with the answer... they've been doing D.I.C.K. (Designing, Inventing, Coding and Koloring pictures).. A few came up with excuses like 'I've been installing shit on my new computer!' or 'I moved my desk over to the Jet-area!', others claimed to not have been here at all this week, and some claimed they didn't even work here... The well known slackers Steve and Blah didn't even

bother to come up with an excuse, but I suppose 'I'm sysadmin' is good enough. I was too slack to ask the management, so in good order, let's just assume they've been slacking too.

Well... I think that should be enough for this time...

Over and out bitchaz!

-tHe MiGhTy SwEdE

Listening to: Eminem

Reading: My old Linear Algebra book (time to freshen up)

Eating: At Harleys (you didn't REALLY think I would cook myself did you?)

* (might n. great bodily or mental strength)

30th June 2000

"You don't know what we've been doing! Why don't you come with me dribble reader, on a magic Dribble ride whoa!"

It's yet another Thursday dribble! Some of you might be beginning to get suspicious, but it's for a good reason this time - much like the Mrs Swede last week, Ms. Wipe is leaving in order to travel the world for a few months. So, because of this, I have to spend a day or so with her before she leaves, so that she doesn't cotton on to my secret plan of filling the coming 4 months with endless Counterstrike LAN parties, Perfect Dark binges, and enough junk food to choke a person in hospital for a throat operation.

Of course, there are some downsides to this: I now have to clean up Chester the Miracle Cat's kitty litter, and I can't weasel out of washing the dishes either. sigh. However, with Tax Time coming up, I'm sure I can use my refund cheque to buy a dishwasher and a monkey who likes cleaning kitty litter.

That's the main problem with tax refunds - They take so long to arrive that by the time they turn up, you've already planned to spend it about three or four different ways. Already, I've planned on buying a dedicated NAT router, a new 100mbps hub, a dishwasher, new carpet, a new motherboard/CPU/3D card combo, powered garage doors and a monkey suffering from fecalphelia. I dread to think of what I'll plan in the next two weeks :)

Well, today saw the start of the major construction below us. For those who don't know, we "live" in a four-storey building in Teneriffe. We actually take up the whole fourth floor, while all the other floors were (until recently) empty. However, the new landlords have decided to turn the floors of this unused warehouse into a chic inner-city apartment block. This means that people have to come in with Jackhammers and do various loud construction things. The downside to this is that for about 10 seconds every 15 seconds all day, *everything* on my desk will shake. Suprisingly enough, this is not helpful when you are trying to finish a design document :)

Someone told me a while ago that you get used to construction work after a while. For me, it's 2 hours and counting - I'll let you know when I "get used to it". Incense-breathing-knuckle-dragging yahoo.

This week also saw the mad reshuffling of the desks on the east side of the building. At least I think it's the east side - Bulimba is on the other side of the river, and I'm guessing that it's either east or south. That's not the point though - the point is we are now arranged into project based....er...shapes. Marketing/Web is a circle, Jet is now a weird rectangle with a point, and Koolthings is currently a triangle blossoming into a pentagon. This means even though I only had to move my desk 5 metres to the right, it still took me an hour or so to set up all of my gadgets and stuffed Pokemon to the way they were five metres ago.

By the way, if you've lost two 60W Phillips light globes still in their boxes, they are in the right hand gutter on the Shafston Rd/Story Bridge overpass. You might want to grab them before someone runs over them.

We've had a veritable forest-like quantity of new staff join us in the last few weeks. So much so, that I can get away with putting them in a list! Yeah, List time!:

- Sadie just arrived this week, and is a 3D Animator on Hårn: Bloodline
- Skidmarx joins the Hårn: Bloodline team as a senior programmer
- Steve has joined us from the freezing-cold UK as the lead artist for "Secret Project 2"
- Robert drove all the way from Adelaide to join the Koolthingz team as an Advisor/Artist.

If I say any more, I'll give away too much :)

On the Hårn: Bloodline side of things, everyone is still recovering from the week-long workfest that was known as "The Project". Not much can be said about it, but if it all goes ahead, you can bet that it'll be one of the biggest games out when it is released. Not that Hårn: Bloodline won't be either...it'll just be big in the normal "leave your jaw dragging along the ground" way!

What the hell are YOU staring at!?

sprayNwipe

==_==_==_==

Playing: Perfect Dark (N64). Is Goldeneye, is good :)

Listening to: Resin Dogs, RATM, A Perfect Circle

Planning: How to fit as many LAN days into 4 months as possible

Word of the Week: Fatuous ("Blah has such a fatuous goat")

7th July 2000

The mystery Dribble

by Flex

Busy, busy, busy.

This week we did heaps o' stuff.

Such as...

Concept Art

Coding

Gribbly sat in his office and 'designed'

Install Diablo 2

Sing stange songs

Discuss future paths through the ether

Play some VF3 - as usual I regularly spanked Gribbly

Some new people errr person started...Go Team Louis!

More news next week...

The End

Watching : The Straight Story by David Lynch

Reading : The Last of the Mohicans by James Fenimore Cooper

14th July 2000

Supreme Galactic Overload (sic), Members of the Bored of Serial Nonsense Board, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, I welcome you to this week's Dribble.

Before embarking on the main body of the Dribble, I feel it is important to define our terms:

Main Entry: dribble

Pronunciation: 'dri-b&l

Function: verb

Inflected Form(s): drib·bled; drib·bling /-(&-)li[ng]/

Etymology: frequentative of drib (to dribble)

Date: circa 1589

transitive senses

1 : to issue sporadically and in small bits

2 : to let or cause to fall in drops little by little

3 a : to propel by successive slight taps or bounces with hand, foot, or stick b : to hit (as a baseball) so as to cause a slow bouncing

intransitive senses

1 : to fall or flow in drops or in a thin intermittent stream : TRICKLE

2 : to let saliva trickle from the corner of the mouth : DROOL

3 : to come or issue in piecemeal or desultory fashion

[definition courtesy of <http://www.m-w.com>]

When CyberSpice came to me this morning, astride her gleaming mechanical unicorn with the aerosol nostrils (mmm... artificial pine fresh), she demanded -- as she does every fourth Friday -- that I "dribble".

I found myself gripped by an existential panic*. I yelped manfully, and hid under Flex's desk for most of the day. She found me, though, and applied the "persuasion techniques" she learnt in her training in Captain Important's underground stronghold**. If you're curious, it involves a syringe.

Thus persuaded, I leapt slothfully to my keyboard (most have qwerty, some opt for Dvorak, I prefer the ustvolskaya[<http://www.siue.edu/~aho/musov/ust/ust.html>]). But, I asked myself, what kind of dribble is required? Is it the "sporadically" one? The "saliva" one? Frankly, none of them sounded that appealing.

Then it struck me -- the "desultory" one. Go look up "desultory" at <http://www.m-w.com>, come back and tell me that this isn't right on the money.

Anyway... this week Auran has been -- like the rest of the world -- totally bowled over by that blushing maiden of dungeon-crawling gameplay, Diablo II. Usually the conversation around the coffee urn centres on zeppelin design and construction[<http://www.sciam.com/1999/1199issue/1199hagenlocher.html>], Brian Eno's "oblique strategies"[<http://www.rtqe.net/ObliqueStrategies/OSintro.html>], OR the fate of Anastasia[<http://www.lostsecrets.com/>], last of the Romanovs. But this week it's all been:

"I'm a level 33 sorceress!"

"Oh well, you wouldn't have seen the end of Act 4 yet. The giraffe demon is awesome -- he has a prehensile neck that's -4 to magic"

"I couldn't find a server..."

Swedish good-for-nothings Mighty Swede and Handsome (along with erstwhile local good-for-nothing Blahnana) appear to be the main culprits, spending the majority of their worki^H^H^H^H waking hours mainling that Blizzard goodness.

Me, I'm not much of a Diablo nut. I have hacked around on Battle.net as a necromancer, and it's kinda cool. I confess that I'm very impressed by the level of polish Blizzard have achieved. This game gleams.

Wait, I know what you're thinking, "oh great, that's just what I need. Another Diablo II review".

You'd be right to think that. I'll stop.

Design work on "ProjectX" continues apace. There'll be an official announcement (with streamers and those little cocktail frankfurts) in 'short while'. CyberSpice promises, don't you CyberSpice? Yours truly, designer-of-mystery-projects-extraordinaire, has been working closely with... er... some important folks on the interface, story and multiplayer aspects of "The Project".

The artistes have been web-bro^H^H^H producing concept sketches with the alacrity of a pair of frog-legs in Galvani's laboratory. This week they've been focusing on high level environment concepts, and boy do they look spiffy.

Our QA department has been rapidly expanding under the watchful eye of Dr. Nicola. Blahnana and Fishman are now officially his lieutenants, and have been joined by the redoubtable Bowser (ex-Beam in Melbourne, like me!).

Er... 'Skidmarks' and Andriy have apparently been implementing multiplayer code, but all I've seen them doing is sitting around playing something that looks very much like asteroids :) Still, I've learned that it's best not to question the ways of programmers, for they are mysterious and can hack your mainframe.

Also, a big welcome to new tech-dewd 'Roger', who's contributions to the DC community here at Auran HQ will be sung in the form of epic ballads long after his last Everquest character has been terminated for lack activity.

Desultory (look it up!) Dribble concludes.

da grib.

Listening to: Galina Ustvolskaya ("The Lady with the Hammer")

Watching: X-Men tonight, I think!

Playing: Diablo II in bitesize chunks, and at being a C++ programmer. It ain't so hard. *syntax error* Damn!

Reading: New Scientist -- it makes me just like a real scientist!

*panic may not have been existential

** see Episode 9, "The Ridiculous Vest"

21th July 2000

It's Dribble Time already? Wow, that crept up on me!

The Mighty Swede isn't here, so it's good ol' sprayNwipe's turn to write the dribble! And..er..I really don't have anything prepared cause I've been busy working on Koolthingz stuff!

Well there's some sad news for me - my Dreamcast died a few days ago. Died, I tell you! And right around the release of Jet Set Radio, Virtua Tennis, Shenmue US, Seaman US and Space Channel 5 US. AAAAARGH! NOOO! TAKE ME INSTEAD!!!! I've even tried randomly spinning the CD in the hope that it would "wake up" and realise that it was taking its own life just moments before said happiness! I guess I'll just have to wait the 3 months to get the darn thing replaced....

NO! NOT ME!!

NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!!!!

ahem.

Work-wise, everybody has been busy working on Project X. Gribbly has been busy with designing, and all of the artists are busy doing concept and first drafts at art for the game. The programmers on the other hand, have been toiling away at the new foundation for the game!

Last night, a whole bunch of people from Auran went to QANTM to see their games course graduation ceremony. It seemed to be an artist-only event, and I wasn't invited. Fine! I don't need to go to some ceremony! I'll just play some Counterstrike! Anyway, they reported back that a good time was had by all and there was talent abound amongst the graduates.

Did you know that Cheese is GST free? This probably explains why Blah has been 10% better at Jacky (bah dah ching).

Actually, Virtua Fighter 3tb has been temporarily dethroned from the "King of Lunchtime Dreamcast Games" by the ultra-sweet Virtua Tennis! Finally, we have a decent 4-player game for the Dreamcast. Sure, the fact that I don't know any Tennis rules was a slight problem to start with. Well, replace "slight problem to start with" with "caused my team mate in doubles to curse and yell at me for some stupid rule about hitting the ball past some lame line when it isn't served to me on an odd-numbered day". But still, it's fun, and Blah and Gribbly haven't started to dominate it yet, which is always a good sign.

Sadly, this is probably my last Dribble for a while (that is, unless one of the dribblers falls sick) as I'm leaving Auran in early August for a few months to get some good ol' R&R. Will I be back? Well, maybe - it depends if I survive the Star Cube launch ;p .I've always wondered what I'd write in my final dribble. I think the Beastie Boys said it best in "Do It":

Well, I'm A Six Point Seven On The Richter Scale
I've Got Rhymes Galore And Then I Never Fail
Like Gravy On Potatos, Luke To Darth Vader
I'm A Souped Up Sucker And I'll See You All Later

So in the words of Poochy the Dog: "I must go now. My planet needs me"

So long and farewell,

sprayNwipe

While I'm here, I might as well do some self-pimping: If you want to join the ranks of us lowly Game Developers, have a look at <http://ausgamejobs.qgl.org> - It's a site that I'm co-administering (for the time being at least) which helps out budding young game developer wannabes find a job in the blossoming Australian Game Industry.

Yes I realise that it is shameless self-promoting. My excuse is that it's a community service, so nyuh!

28th July 2000

Yay, the Zwede iz back!

I can't tell you how excited I am about one of the greatest social events ever to be pulled off here at Auran. Thanks to my fellow Swede Bjorn who now lives in Leeds, I've got my own copy of one of the greatest films ever made in the 1980's; "Steel Dawn" - featuring Patrick Swayze as a lone desert warrior. Tight leather pants, shiny swords with little diamond holes in em to improve the swooshy sounds, and fabulous hairdos that makes you wonder where the hell they find that much hairspray in the desert.. need I say more? Oh yeah, I think so! The plot is just an extraordinary, intriguing piece of art... basically Patrick's bald mentor "Cord" is killed by this really mean mercenary named "Sho".. naturally this pisses Patrick off so he spends the rest of the movie trying to whack this guy! Excellent!

I particularly like these two quotes from the back of the tape:

"The dirty dancer is now a desert warrior!"

"So starts a crusade of fear and friendship. And a quest for peace fuelled by vengeance."

Oh yeah! Those marketing guys are just pure genii (yeah, I had to look that up)... they've got me hooked!

We're showing it on our big screen thingo.. something like 4x2m, and if we borrow Perlin's (our local heavy rock band) PA, I reckon we'll get the real cinema feeling happening..

Aaanyway.. besides the Swayze frenzy.. what's been going on here at Auran? Well.. two of the dribblers have mysteriously disappeared.. rumour tells me that Gribbly and Flex are trekking around south-east Asia, trying to unveil the mysteries of the gaming minds down there.. oops.. up there, keep forgetting where I am nowadays. Unconfirmed reports tell me that Gribbly has been seen sitting on a mountain top with a DreamCast on his head repeating the words "I'm not afraid of other consoles.. DreamCast will rule the known world!".

We, as in all the smelly eccentric programmers working on Jet, has been busy as usual with the upcoming release, matched only by the doc-writing dudes from hell (also known as the standard-nazis) Mephistu and Ardii going bezerk

over the spelling of "quaquaversal quaternion" and how many "z" and "s" it really should be in "Zarathustrian zabaglione" and "schistosomiasis".

The other side of the office... has literally had an population explosion.. a baby boom.. or maybe Trish's invented a rapid cloning process... The place is just crammed with artists and stuff... I wouldn't even pretend to know all the new guys names.. I've got enough problems remembering names in my own family.. but hey "You artisty looking dude there!" - has worked fine so far.

The programmer types on the other side of the room, that is the guys working on the game, have been pretty busy too.. I've seen some multiplayer action happening over there. Lacking some vital animations, all the characters were fixed in a "crucified" pose though, but I'm sure it's only temporarily.

Well.. seeing as it's a short Friday today (drinks day...yay!) I'd better get started on all that work I was supposed to finish this week..

Oh, and much like SprayNWipe.. I'm actually signing off as dribbler at the end of August too... I'm heading back to the fatherland again.. well, I've probably got another dribble left to write before I go, so until next time!

-The Mighty Swede

Listening to: R.E.M. (why don't all the other bands just give up? They couldn't possibly beat R.E.M)

Reading: Inside the tornado (George is forcing me!)

Eating: Pancakes! Oooh that place in the city rocks!

4th August 2000

As Mighty Swede told you last week

-- that is, when he wasn't waxing lyrical about the "talents" of Patrick Swayze -- Flex and yours truly spent the last week in South Korea. We had a rather lovely time investigating the local game market, eating too much Korean BBQ and showing the locals how Quake is played, dammit:



Oh and Flex "appreciated" the local girls... I don't do that sort of thing -- I'm a married man!

Of course I suffered terribly from Dreamcast withdrawal. I was surprised to learn that consoles are banned in Korea. Who knew? The Koreans and the Japanese aren't on the best of terms (although it seems the situation is improving), and Japanese content is not encouraged. Apparently there is a significant console black market, but we wouldn't know anything about that.

Most of the gaming in Korea takes place in "IGRs" -- Internet Game Rooms. These are basically rooms full of PCs (most have around 30 machines, some bigs ones have several hundred!), all connected to the Internet. Everyone plays StarCraft. Everyone. Unless it's a co-incidence, they seem to have named a new model of minivan "StarCraft" to tap into the incredible buzz surrounding this game.

When we weren't in the game rooms schooling the locals (er...), we were at Yongsan "Electronic World" and/or Technomart. These are the Korean equivalent of Japan's "Gadget City". This means lots and lots and lots (perhaps thousands) of stalls selling (really cheap, by Australian standards) CD players, walkmans, MP3 players, digital cameras, etc., etc. Geek heaven, in other words.

While we were there, Flex and I found time to visit a couple of the local attractions. First, we went to Kukkiwon -- the World Tae Kwon Do HQ! This was very cool, and we managed to talk the museum attendant into giving us a Takkyun demonstration. In return, Flex demonstrated his prowess with some breaking feats:



Awesome stuff, Flex.

We also managed a day trip to the "DMZ". This is the de-militarized zone between North and South Korea. Very interesting trip, although for a "de-militarized" zone there's a _lot_ of heavily armed 19 year old Korean dudes wandering about (mostly making sure dumb-ass tourists don't do anything stupid).

We were allowed to enter the "3rd infiltration tunnel". This is the third (of an estimated 20) tunnel that the North Koreans have dug for "mining". This one is just 44km North of Seoul! Ouch. We were only allowed to take pictures in the carpark:



All in all, we had an entertaining and informative trip. After a grand total of four hours sleep (two hours each), Flex and I presented our "findings" to the Auran crew. I'm sure everyone will correct me, but I thought it went pretty well. Now, to convince the powers that be that Flex and I should investigate the booming PC game market in the the Bahamas...

It would seem that the team have been very busy in our absence. Extremely stable multiplayer and chat functions went in while we were away, and I've had a tonne of fun intruding on the QA test games of Fishman and Mr. N. Although not the

most user friendly of systems (you have to hex edit a .DLL to change your username!), it is robust, fast, and (like all chatting) dumb fun!

Signing off!

gribbly.

Watching: Erin Brokovitch on the plane. I cried. Well... Flex did anyway.
Listening to: Cypress Hill -- Skull and Bones.
Playing: Jet Set Radio (which rules), and Mr. Driller (which totally rules).
Reading: "Bringing Out the Dead". Courtesy of Jamamoto...

11th August 2000

Flex Mentallo here, Dribbles!

Work continues apace on Project X!

After returning from fun and games (and hard work) in Korea, its back to work in the warehouse of love.

X is coming along nicely and quickly indeed. The new, improved Scenario Editor is up and running courtesy of Bandit, Handsome has made a chest miraculously open, Cookie had weird pentagrams on his machine, Phoenix has been doing combat stuff I think, and Skidmarx and Andriy have been working on various multiplayer thingamajigs.

On the art side things are progressing, although its still early days yet. Miss Shenava's first character should be in the game soon, and Sadie has been handing animations to Phoenix so I assume they are combat anims. Louis has been working on a certain character and weapon that I can't really talk about, Irina has been doing a character and now some Scenario objects, and Artur has been doing some very spiffo looking buildings. Oh and I've started doing mockups of the interface, which we should be able to chuck into the game without too much difficulty, hopefully next week.

That's prolly all I can say about X at the moment.

Jet is cranking towards the beta release of the engine in September - they're all doing what they do over there.

Two departures this week - sprayNwipe is off overseas with his g/f for a few months, and maybe returning to his duties on Trainz at some date in the future. Also heading off is Jet 3d Ninja and German-speed-black-metal-whatever- master Pete is heading back to Sweden. Best of luck guys, it won't be the same without ya!

Hint to the kidz at home - don't plug 240v into a Japanese PS2 - its not pretty! Not that I've seen that happen anywhere. Sadder is the fact the DC is still MIA and apparently has to head off to the land of the rising sun for 'repairs'. Grrr....We just need to buy a replacement, methinks!

We have a new chap starting this week in the art dept., Craig and it wouldn't surprise me if other new people are starting too, but I can't keep track of it all when I'm working.

Don't forget to check out the message boards for Jet and Trainz (no there isn't one for X at the moment)...

I guess that's it.

Flex Out.

Watching : ACK! I succumbed to Survivor in the final home stretch...NOOOOOO!
Wanting to Watch : The Virgin Suicides
Reading : Daughter of the Empire by the Feist-meister...been good 10 years since I read this
Listening to : errr...ummm...Oops I Did it Again by Britney...ummm...well...
Playing : Too much - d2, Vampire, Vagrant Story, Grandia, Soul Reaver...ack! But mosly I'm playing the most fun game I've found in a while - Mr. Driller (he's saving the city from falling coloured blocks!)

P.S. Brisbanites should check out the Anime fest at the Dendy on the 7th to the 10th Sept. - they are premiering Mononoke Hime/Princess Mononoke there...woohoo! Sydneysiders actually get to meet and greet Mamoru Oshii (amongst others) when the Anime fest is there. Damn you southern folks and your big cities and your fancy cars, and err...I'll stop now.

18th August 2000

Hi, I'm the dribbler. You may remember me from such dribbles as, "Dribbler Come Home", "Lost in Dribble", and "The Dribblers".

You know, once a long, long, time ago I exploded into the void and declared myself an independent state, complete with flag and oversized novelty tennis shoes. But I've come to realise it's not about what you've got, it's how you lead yourself when the cows hit the fan.

Pleasantries dispensed with, lets get down to business. It's been one of those weeks where I've been given a bold new direction, and lets face it, most bold new directions are fun with a capital "UN". I've been working closely with the Mighty Swede on a little something that is remarkably poignant to the upcoming release of the *AURAN Jet* Beta (What do you mean "Jet Beta??" Go cheggitout here. [<http://www.auran.com/technologies/jet/>]) It's all hush-hush at the moment (tired of being teased by dribblers? Try NEW TEASEOL, guaranteed to take the "ZOWIE" out of "Tantalizing Behaviour").

Since being unearthed from the bowels of the office (A.K.A. QA) where I was previously situated, to my new position in the Jet Team circle, I've been having an interesting time trying to keep the Jet Team honest (by means of constant whining and threats of violence). I seem to be having a positive effect on the team, not in the least of which I believe relates to my Counter-Strike playing, which of course inevitably results in taunts and exclamations of disbelief.

Further to Gribbly and Flex's (holiday!) working business trip to Korea not so long ago we had some honcho's from EA Korea visiting us during the week. I carefully hid my StarCraft cd behind Flex's "Barry White -- Greatest Hit's" CD so that there was no chance that I'd be challenged to some kind of "Australia vs Korea" StarCraft showdown with the fellas that reputedly play more StarCraft than (the man trapped in a room with a computer and Starcraft the only things installed and food pushed through every day for a year). Lucky for them, they've managed to somehow avoid my challenge and it looks like they've got away without tasting defeat at the hands of the dribbler. (It's amazing what you can write when it's your column and you can cry if you want to).

The Project X team is really starting to push out some really good stuff (despite my not being on the team -- go figure!!), including starting to put together some nice looking (goats!!) editors, which is no doubt a direct result of a streamlined Jet->Project X build process overseen by me (why is everyone laughing?).

Thus concludes the Dribble. Don't forget to check out the forums. [<http://www.auran.com/cgi-bin/Ultimate.cgi>]

The Dribbler.

(Disclaimer: All inappropriate content was not written by me. All amusing anecdotes were. Where the two co-exist, take the amusing stuff as mine, using the inappropriate content from someone else.)

Watching : The skies; You never know when a nerf arrow will spear in your direction

Reading : Something by John Buchan, I'm not good with names... Richard Hannay isn't the main character...

Listening to : The sounds of Gunfire in my mind... too much Counter-Strike?

Playing : Diablo 2 (v1.00 so I can train fast with my new barbarian), Counter-Strike.

Laughing at: myself mostly, though gribbly's new overalls are most entertaining.

Re-enacting: Various amusing Counter-Strike battles.

25th August 2000

Thanks for being such dedicated followers of the Dribble.

We are revamping the format of the Dribble and the site in general, so keep an eye out for an all new experience shortly. In the meantime, visit the discussion forums to keep up-to-date with development on AURAN Jet and Trainz.
